BANGLADESH DEFENSE POLICY

Foundations, Futures and Frameworks

by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks

A Comprehensive Academic Textbook in Sixteen Parts

S M Nazmuz Sakib

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Table of Contents

Copyright Page 39

Part One: Foundations of Defense Policy, Theory, Philosophy, History, and the Architecture of Strategic Thought 40

FOREWORD TO PART ONE 40

CHAPTER ONE: THE IDEA OF DEFENSE - PHILOSOPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ORIGINS 41

1.1 What Is Defense? The Question Before the Policy 41

1.2 The Philosophical Heritage: From Antiquity to Modernity 41

1.3 The Medieval and Early Modern Synthesis 42

1.4 Modern Strategic Thought: Clausewitz, Mahan, Douhet, and Beyond 44

1.5 Contemporary Strategic Theory: Hybrid War, Gray Zone Operations, and Multi-Domain Conflict 45

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND ITS EVOLUTION 45

2.1 Defining National Security: The Contested Terrain 46

2.2 The Security Dilemma and Its Application to Bangladesh 46

2.3 Deterrence Theory and Its Relevance to a Small-to-Medium Power 47

2.4 The Concept of Strategic Autonomy 48

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORY AND THE MAKING OF BANGLADESH'S SECURITY IDENTITY 48

3.1 The Colonial Legacy and Its Security Implications 48

3.2 Partition, Pakistan, and the Security of East Bengal 49

3.3 Liberation War and the Birth of National Defense 50

3.4 The Post-Liberation Crisis: Coups, Instability, and the Militarization of Politics 51

3.5 Forces Goal 2030: The First Formal Defense Planning Framework 52

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT - UNDERSTANDING BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION 53

4.1 Geography as Destiny: Bangladesh's Strategic Location 53

4.2 The India Relationship: Asymmetric Partnership and Structural Tensions 54

4.3 China: Arms Partner, Development Financier, and Strategic Complication 54

4.4 Myanmar: The Neighbor in Crisis 55

4.5 The Bay of Bengal: Contested Maritime Space and Strategic Opportunity 56

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEFENSE 57

5.1 Constitutional Foundations: What the Basic Law Says About Defense 57

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

5.2 The Special Powers Act and Security Legislation 58
5.3 The Army Act, Navy Act, and Air Force Act 59
5.4 International Law and Its Interface with Defense Policy 59
CHAPTER SIX: JURISPRUDENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF DEFENSE POLICY 60
6.1 Natural Law and Its Defense Applications 60
6.2 Legal Positivism and the Rule of Law in Defense 60
6.3 Critical Legal Studies and the Politics of Security Law 61
6.4 Islamic Jurisprudence and Its Relevance to Defense 62
CHAPTER SEVEN: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH 63
7.1 Realism and Its Enduring Insights 63
7.2 Liberalism, Institutionalism, and the Democratic Peace 63
7.3 Constructivism and the Social Construction of Security 64
7.4 Post-Colonial Theory and the Specific Anxieties of the Former Colony 65
7.5 Complex Interdependence and the Limits of Military Solutions 65
CHAPTER EIGHT: GLOBAL DIPLOMACY, FOREIGN POLICY, AND DEFENSE 66
8.1 The Concept of Strategic Balancing: Bangladesh's Preferred Posture 66
8.2 United Nations Peacekeeping: Defense Policy as Diplomacy 67
8.3 Bangladesh's Multilateral Frameworks: SAARC, BIMSTEC, and Regional Architecture 67
CHAPTER NINE: POLITICAL THEORY, CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE 68
9.1 The Theory of Civil-Military Relations: Huntington, Janowitz, and Beyond 68
9.2 The Problem of Corruption in Defense Procurement 69
9.3 Democratic Accountability and Defense: International Comparisons 70
CHAPTER TEN: DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING: THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND TECHNIQUE 70
10.1 The Nature and Purpose of Defense Policy Documents 70
10.2 The Drafting Process: Participants, Mechanisms, and Challenges 71
10.3 Comparative Analysis of Defense Policy Drafting: Case Studies 72
10.4 Necessity-Based Drafting: Principles and Application 73
10.5 The Defense Policy Drafting Toolkit: Analytical Frameworks 73
CHAPTER ELEVEN: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT OF 2024-2026 74
11.1 The Political Transition and Its Defense Implications 74

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

11.2 The Budget Reality: Resources and Constraints 75
11.3 The Indigenous Defense Industry: Potential and Limits 76
CHAPTER TWELVE: TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE POLICY ARCHITECTURE 76
12.1 The Elements of a Comprehensive Defense Policy 76
12.2 The Role of Intelligence in Defense Policy 78
12.3 Cyber Security as a Defense Domain 78
12.4 Space and Emerging Technologies 79
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONTROVERSIES IN BANGLADESH DEFENSE POLICY 79
13.1 The Civil-Military Relations Controversy 79
13.2 The China Dependency Controversy 80
13.3 The Rohingya Security Challenge: Humanitarian Crisis Meets Defense Policy 81
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: DRAFTING THE FUTURE - FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR A BANGLADESH DEFENSE POLICY 81
14.1 The First Draft Framework: Principles-Based Approach 81
14.2 The Second Draft Framework: Threat-Response Architecture 82
14.3 The Third Draft Framework: Capability-Based Planning 84
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATION AND REFORM 86
15.1 The Current Legislative Framework: Assessment and Critique 86
15.2 The Case for a National Defense Act 86
15.3 Intelligence Oversight Legislation 87
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS AND LOOKING FORWARD 87
16.1 The Enduring Tension: Security and Liberty 87
16.2 The Philosophical Foundations of Future Policy 88
16.3 The Path Forward: Recommendations for Policy Development 88
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS FOR DEFENSE POLICY EVALUATION 89
17.1 How to Evaluate a Defense Policy: Criteria and Methodology 89
17.2 The Analytical Framework for Ongoing Assessment 90
CONCLUSION TO PART ONE: THE INTELLECTUAL ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE FUTURE 90
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART ONE 92
FOREWORD TO PART TWO 94
CHAPTER ONE: THE COMPARATIVE METHOD IN DEFENSE POLICY ANALYSIS 95

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 Why Compare? The Value and Limits of Cross-National Defense Analysis 95
1.2 Criteria for Case Selection 96
CHAPTER TWO: VIETNAM - THE MASTER CLASS IN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY 97
2.1 Vietnam's Strategic Position: Analogies and Differences 97
2.2 The "Four Nos" Doctrine: Content, Application, and Limits 97
2.3 Vietnam's Military Doctrine: People's War and Conventional Modernization 98
2.4 Vietnam's Defense Industry: Ambitions and Realities 99
CHAPTER THREE: SOUTH KOREA - THE ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT MASTER CLASS 99
3.1 South Korea's Strategic Dilemma: The Foundational Challenge 100
3.2 The Alliance with the United States: Management and Autonomy 100
3.3 South Korea's Defense White Paper: Transparency and Strategic Communication 100
3.4 South Korea's Defense Industrial Complex: The Transformation Model 101
CHAPTER FOUR: INDONESIA - THE ARCHIPELAGIC POWER AND ITS SECURITY DOCTRINE 102
4.1 Indonesia's Strategic Situation: The World's Largest Archipelago 102
4.2 The "Bebas dan Aktif" Doctrine: Free and Active Foreign Policy 103
4.3 Indonesia's Defense Reform: The Territorial Command System 103
4.4 Indonesia's Maritime Security: The World Maritime Axis Doctrine 104
CHAPTER FIVE: TURKEY - THE ARMS INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION AND ITS LESSONS 104
5.1 Turkey's Defense Transformation: From Import Dependence to Export Power 104
5.2 Baykar and the Drone Revolution: What Bangladesh Can Learn 105
5.3 Turkey's Air Defense Development: The SIPER Program and Bangladesh 106
CHAPTER SIX: ISRAEL - THE SMALL STATE DEFENSE MODEL AND ITS SPECIFIC LESSONS 107
6.1 Israel's Strategic Concept: The Pillars of Small State Defense 107
6.2 The Israeli Defense Industry: From Necessity to Global Leadership 107
6.3 Lessons from Israel's Comprehensive National Defense Doctrine 108
CHAPTER SEVEN: SINGAPORE - THE SMALL STATE DEFENSE EXCELLENCE MODEL 108
7.1 Singapore's "Poisonous Shrimp" Strategy 108
7.2 Civil-Military Integration in Singapore 109
CHAPTER EIGHT: FINLAND - THE EXISTENTIAL DETERRENCE MODEL 109
8.1 Finland's Cold War Strategy and Its Post-2022 Evolution 109
8.2 Finland's Territorial Defense and Reserve System 110
CHAPTER NINE: THE BAY OF BENGAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT - A DEEPER ANALYSIS 110

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

9.1 The Bay of Bengal as a New Strategic Locus 110
9.2 Bangladesh's Maritime Strategy: Current Posture and Future Requirements 111
9.3 The Submarine Question: Strategic Logic and Practical Constraints 112
CHAPTER TEN: GLOBAL STRATEGIC DYNAMICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON BANGLADESH 113
10.1 The US-China Competition and South Asian Consequences 113
10.2 China's 2025 Defense White Paper and Its Implications for Bangladesh 113
10.3 The Russia-Ukraine War and Global Defense Industry Implications 114
10.4 The India-Pakistan Nuclear Dimension and Bangladesh 115
CHAPTER ELEVEN: BANGLADESH'S RECENT DEFENSE TRAJECTORY - A DETAILED 2024-2026 ASSESSMENT 115
11.1 The July Revolution and Its Immediate Defense Policy Consequences 115
11.2 The Diversification Drive: A Detailed Assessment of 2024-2026 Partnerships 116
11.3 The J-10CE Decision: Continuity Within Diversification 117
11.4 The Budget Crisis: Modernization Ambitions Versus Fiscal Reality 118
CHAPTER TWELVE: THE INDIGENOUS DEFENSE INDUSTRY - A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS 119
12.1 Current State Assessment 119
12.2 The Defense Economic Zone Proposal 119
12.3 Technology Transfer: The Critical Variable 120
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS - DEEPER ANALYSIS AND REFORM PATHWAYS 121
13.1 The Structural Sources of Military Influence in Bangladesh 121
13.2 Reform Pathways: International Models and Bangladesh Applicability 121
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: INTERNATIONAL LAW UPDATE - DEVELOPMENTS RELEVANT TO BANGLADESH 122
14.1 The Laws of Armed Conflict in the Twenty-First Century 122
14.2 Cyber Operations Under International Law 123
14.3 Climate Change and the Law of the Sea 123
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: SECOND DRAFT FRAMEWORKS - DETAILED POLICY MODELS 124
15.1 Draft Maritime Security Policy Framework 124
15.2 Draft Air Defense Policy Framework 125
15.3 Draft Cyber Security Defense Framework 126
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE - RESOURCES, INTERESTS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY 127

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

16.1 The Political Economy of Defense Procurement 127
16.2 The Defense Budget Process: Transparency and Accountability 128
16.3 The Military Business Empire: The Reform Imperative 128
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: BANGLADESH'S DIPLOMATIC ARCHITECTURE AND DEFENSE 129
17.1 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy Coordination 129
17.2 Track 1.5 and Track 2 Diplomacy in Defense 130
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: TOWARD PART THREE - THE AGENDA FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM 130
18.1 Summary of Legislative Reform Requirements 130
18.2 The Legislative Drafting Challenge 131
CONCLUSION TO PART TWO: THE COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS AND FORWARD DIRECTION 132
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TWO 133
Part Three: Legislative Architecture, Security Sector Reform, Democratic Oversight, and the Jurisprudence of Defense Governance 135
FOREWORD TO PART THREE 135
CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND ITS APPLICATION TO BANGLADESH 137
1.1 What is Security Sector Reform? The Conceptual Foundations 137
1.2 The Historical Pattern of Failure: Why Previous Reform Efforts Have Not Held 138
1.3 The 2024-2026 Reform Moment: Assessment and Analysis 139
1.4 The Principal-Agent Problem in Security Governance 141
CHAPTER TWO: CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 142
2.1 The Constitution as the Supreme Security Document 142
2.2 The Fundamental Rights Framework and its Security Implications 143
2.3 Parliamentary Authority over Defense: Constitutional Provisions and their Practical Failures 144
CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT 145
3.1 The Legislative Vacuum and its Consequences 145
3.2 Comparative Models: What a National Defense Act Should Contain 146
3.3 The Command Authority Question: Constitutional and Political Dimensions 147
3.4 Draft Framework for a Bangladesh National Defense Act: Preliminary Architecture 148
CHAPTER FOUR: MILITARY JUSTICE REFORM AND THE JURISPRUDENCE OF ARMED FORCES LAW 150
4.1 The Theory of Military Justice: Why Armed Forces Need Their Own Legal System 150
4.2 The Enforced Disappearances Crisis and Military Justice: A Case Study 151

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

4.3 The Military Justice Reform Agenda: Detailed Analysis 152
CHAPTER FIVE: INTELLIGENCE LAW REFORM AND THE GOVERNANCE OF SECRET POWER 153
5.1 The Intelligence Challenge: Why Intelligence Agencies Require Special Legal Treatment 153
5.2 Bangladesh's Intelligence Architecture: An Assessment 154
5.3 The NCP Reform Proposal and its Legislative Implications 155
5.4 The DGFI Reform: From Political Instrument to Professional Intelligence Agency 156
CHAPTER SIX: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DOMESTIC SECURITY OPERATIONS 157
6.1 The Aid to Civil Power Doctrine: Historical Origins and Contemporary Problems 157
6.2 The International Legal Framework: UN Standards and Comparative Practice 158
6.3 Draft Framework for Domestic Military Deployment Law 159
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CYBER SAFETY ORDINANCE 2025 AND DEFENSE CYBER GOVERNANCE 160
7.1 Bangladesh's Cyber Governance Journey: From the Digital Security Act to the Cyber Safety Ordinance 160
7.2 Cyber Defense as a Military Domain: Doctrinal and Legal Dimensions 161
7.3 The Defense Dimension of Cyber Safety: Legislative Analysis 161
CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE PROCUREMENT LAW AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION 162
8.1 The Political Economy of Defense Corruption: Why Procurement Is the Most Vulnerable Domain 162
8.2 The Case for a Defense Procurement Act 163
8.3 The Bangladesh Defense Economic Zone: Policy Analysis and Legal Framework 164
CHAPTER NINE: THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: DESIGN, JURISPRUDENCE, AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 165
9.1 The NSC Concept: Theory and Comparative Origins 165
9.2 Comparative NSC Models Relevant to Bangladesh 165
9.3 Draft Architecture for a Bangladesh National Security Council 166
CHAPTER TEN: THE ROHINGYA CRISIS, INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND BANGLADESH'S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS 167
10.1 The Humanitarian Crisis as a Defense Policy Variable 167
10.2 Bangladesh's International Law Rights and Obligations 168
10.3 The Myanmar Civil War and Its Defense Policy Implications for Bangladesh 168
CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE FORCES GOAL 2030 REASSESSMENT AND THE 2026-2040 MODERNIZATION PLAN 169
11.1 Forces Goal 2030: Achievements, Gaps, and the Reform Imperative 169

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

11.2 The 75 Billion Dollar Question: The 2026-2040 Modernization Proposal 170
11.3 The Japan Defense Agreement of February 2026: Strategic Significance 171
11.4 The CETC Drone Manufacturing Agreement of January 2026 171
CHAPTER TWELVE: HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND DEFENSE POLICY: THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK 172
12.1 International Human Rights Law and Armed Forces Conduct 172
12.2 The Accountability Imperative: Transitional Justice and Forward-Looking Reform 173
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE DIPLOMACY-DEFENSE NEXUS: BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS 174
13.1 The 2026 Strategic Landscape: Bangladesh as a Networked Security Actor 174
13.2 The India-Bangladesh Strategic Equation After the July Revolution 175
13.3 Legal Architecture of Defense Partnerships: Bilateral and Multilateral Frameworks 175
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND DEFENSE OVERSIGHT: DETAILED LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK 176
14.1 The Theory of Parliamentary Defense Oversight 176
14.2 The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence: A Detailed Reform Proposal 177
14.3 The Budget and Appropriations Process: A Legislative Reform Agenda 178
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: TOWARD A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH 178
15.1 What a National Security Strategy Is and What It Should Contain 179
15.2 The Content of a Bangladesh National Security Strategy: A Detailed Framework 179
15.3 The National Security Policy Process: From Strategy to Implementation 180
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: JURISPRUDENTIAL CONTROVERSIES IN SECURITY LAW: DEEPER ANALYSIS 181
16.1 The Emergency Powers Controversy: Balancing Security and Constitutionalism 181
16.2 The Proportionality Principle and Its Application to Security Law 182
16.3 Legal Pluralism and the Challenge of Governing Security in a Multi-Normative Environment 182
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: SYNTHESIS AND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 183
17.1 The Legislative Reform Agenda: A Comprehensive Summary 183
17.2 The Political Economy of Reform: Why Reform Is Hard and How to Make It Happen 184
CONCLUSION TO PART THREE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 185
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART THREE 186
Primary Sources and Official Documents 186
International and Comparative Legal Sources 187

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Academic Sources 187
Recent Analytical Sources (2024-2026) 188
Part Four: Military Doctrine, Force Structure, Operational Theory, and the Architecture of Twenty-First Century Defense Capability 189
FOREWORD TO PART FOUR 189
CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF MILITARY DOCTRINE 190
1.1 What is Military Doctrine? The Definitional Foundations 191
1.2 The History of Military Doctrine: Major Schools and Their Evolution 191
1.3 Contemporary Doctrinal Developments: Multi-Domain Operations and Integrated Deterrence 193
CHAPTER TWO: BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING MILITARY DOCTRINE: FROM TERRITORIAL DEFENSE TO INTEGRATED DETERRENCE 194
2.1 The Historical Development of Bangladesh's Military Doctrine 194
2.2 The BNP's People's Warfare Doctrine: Historical Roots, Political Logic, and Operational Implications 195
2.3 The Doctrinal Synthesis: Defensive Realism with Asymmetric Deterrence 196
CHAPTER THREE: THE THREE-CORPS REORGANIZATION OF THE BANGLADESH ARMY 197
3.1 The Strategic Logic of the Corps Structure 197
3.2 I Corps (Western Command): Threat Assessment and Operational Concept 198
3.3 II Corps (Central-Eastern Command): The Critical Strategic Depth Problem 199
3.4 III Corps (Southeastern Command): The Littoral Warfare Challenge 200
CHAPTER FOUR: NAVAL DOCTRINE AND MARITIME STRATEGY 201
4.1 The Three-Dimensional Navy Concept: Theoretical Foundation and Current Reality 201
4.2 The Submarine Expansion Negotiations: Strategic Analysis 202
4.3 The Indigenous Frigate Program: Assessment of Delays and Prospects 203
4.4 Maritime Doctrine: Sea Control, Sea Denial, and the Blue Water Question 203
CHAPTER FIVE: AIR POWER DOCTRINE AND THE COMBAT AIRCRAFT DECISION 204
5.1 The Theory of Air Power and Its Application to Bangladesh 204
5.2 The Fighter Aircraft Decision: The Most Consequential Procurement Choice 205
5.3 The BAF 2040 Vision: Network-Centric Air Power 206
CHAPTER SIX: UNMANNED SYSTEMS, ASYMMETRIC CAPABILITIES, AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF PRECISION WARFARE 207
6.1 The Drone Revolution: Doctrinal and Strategic Implications 207

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

6.2 The CETC UAV Agreement: Detailed Analysis and Strategic Assessment 208
6.3 Anti-Tank Guided Missiles and Precision Land Warfare: The FGM-148 Javelin Assessment 209
CHAPTER SEVEN: SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND IRREGULAR WARFARE DOCTRINE 210
7.1 The Growing Strategic Importance of Special Operations 210
7.2 Irregular Warfare Doctrine: The Gap in Bangladesh's Planning 211
CHAPTER EIGHT: JOINT OPERATIONS DOCTRINE AND MULTI-DOMAIN INTEGRATION 211
8.1 The Theory of Joint Operations: Why Service Integration Is Strategically Essential 211
8.2 Bangladesh's Joint Doctrine: Current State and Reform Requirements 212
8.3 C4ISR: The Nervous System of Modern Joint Operations 213
CHAPTER NINE: THE BORDER GUARD BANGLADESH AND THE SECOND LAYER OF TERRITORIAL DEFENSE 214
9.1 The BGB as a Defense Force: Doctrine and Capability 214
9.2 Bangladesh Coast Guard: Expansion and Maritime Security Mission 214
CHAPTER TEN: FORCE STRUCTURE ANALYSIS AND THE 2026-2040 MODERNIZATION FRAMEWORK. 215
10.1 The 75 Billion Dollar Framework: Strategic Assessment 215
10.2 The World Defence Show 2026: Bangladesh's Growing Indigenous Defense Profile 216
10.3 The Reserve Force Concept: Economic Analysis and Doctrinal Assessment 217
CHAPTER ELEVEN: DOCTRINE FOR THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS 218
11.1 Information Warfare and Bangladesh's Vulnerability 218
11.2 Psychological Operations Doctrine 218
CHAPTER TWELVE: STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND FORCE DESIGN SYNTHESIS 219
12.1 Matching Capability to Strategy: The Integration Test 219
12.2 The Doctrinal White Paper: A Proposal 220
CONCLUSION TO PART FOUR: THE ARCHITECTURE OF A CAPABLE AND ACCOUNTABLE DEFENSE 221
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FOUR 221
Primary and Official Sources 222
Academic and Strategic Analysis Sources 222
Recent News and Analysis Sources (2024-2026) 223
PART FIVE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE, MILITARY BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE FISCAL ARCHITECTURE OF NATIONAL SECURITY 224
FOREWORD TO PART FIVE 224

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER ONE: THEORIES OF THE DEFENSE-DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIP 225
1.1 The Classical Guns-Versus-Butter Framing and Its Limitations 225
1.2 The Defense-Economic Growth Nexus: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Debates 226
1.3 The Public Choice Theory of Military Spending 227
1.4 The Political Economy of Arms Imports in Developing States 228
1.5 Comparative Political Economy of Military Economies in South Asia 229
CHAPTER TWO: THE ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE BUDGET 230
2.1 The Formal Budget Structure: What Is Official and What Is Hidden 230
2.2 Budget Composition: The Operational-Capital Imbalance 231
2.3 The 2025-26 Defense Budget: Austerity, Political Context, and Strategic Implications 232
2.4 Comparative Defense Budget Analysis: Where Does Bangladesh Stand? 233
2.5 Defense Financing Mechanisms: Loans, Credits, and Off-Budget Commitments 234
CHAPTER THREE: MILITARY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY 235
3.1 The Genesis and Growth of Military Commercialism in Bangladesh 235
3.2 The Comparative Literature on Military Commercial Enterprises 236
3.3 The Governance Problem: Why Military Commercial Enterprises Resist Accountability 237
3.4 The Competition Problem: Military Enterprises and the Private Sector 238
3.5 A Framework for Reform: Lessons from International Experience 239
CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 240
4.1 Defense Industrialization as Development Strategy: Theory and International Experience 240
4.2 Bangladesh's Defense Industrial Base: Current State and Structural Analysis 241
4.3 The Defense Economic Zone: Design, Rationale, and Political Economy 242
4.4 The Technology Transfer Framework: Legal, Strategic, and Economic Dimensions 244
4.5 The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories Expansion: A Case Study in Defense Industrial Planning . 245
CHAPTER FIVE: BANGLADESH AS A PEACEKEEPING ECONOMY: THE STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF UN CONTRIBUTIONS 246
5.1 The Peacekeeping Dividend: Economic Dimensions of a Strategic Commitment 246
5.2 The Strategic Logic of Peacekeeping: Beyond Economics 246
5.3 The Sustainability Challenge: Peacekeeping Under Fiscal Pressure 247
5.4 Peacekeeping, Civil-Military Relations, and Democratic Accountability 248
5.5 The Future of Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Role in a Changing Global Order 249

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: THE FISCAL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE 2026-2040 DEFENSE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM 250
6.1 The Scale of the Requirement and the Financing Challenge 250
6.2 Scenario Analysis: Three Fiscal Frameworks for 2026-2040 250
6.3 The Procurement Integrity Imperative 251
6.4 The Macroeconomic Implications of Defense Spending Trajectories 252
6.5 A Legislative Framework for Defense Finance: Toward Fiscal Accountability 253
CHAPTER SEVEN: DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY, CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SECURITY GOVERNANCE 254
7.1 The Theory of Democratic Civil-Military Relations: From Huntington to Feaver 254
7.2 The Bangladesh Civil-Military Relations Problem: Historical Context and Current Configuration 255
7.3 Legislative Architecture for Democratic Defense Governance 256
7.4 The Parliamentary Defense Committee: Architecture and Institutional Requirements 257
7.5 Jurisprudential Dimensions: Defense, Rights, and Constitutional Accountability 258
CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BANGLADESHI DEFENSE: SYNTHESIS AND FRAMEWORK 260
8.1 The Developmental Security State: A Conceptual Framework 260
8.2 The Political Economy of Defense Reform: Who Wins and Who Loses 261
8.3 The 2026-2040 Defense Policy Framework: Integrating Security, Economy, and Governance 261
8.4 A Draft Legislative Agenda: Priority Legislation for Defense Political Economy Reform 262
8.5 The International Dimensions of Defense Political Economy: Partners, Conditionality, and Strategic Finance 264
CONCLUSION TO PART FIVE: THE INDIVISIBILITY OF SECURITY, ECONOMY, AND GOVERNANCE 265
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FIVE 266
Theoretical and Conceptual Sources 266
Bangladesh-Specific Sources 267
Comparative and International Sources 268
PART SIX: THE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF BANGLADESH'S SECURITY: BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS, REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS, AND THE INDO-PACIFIC ORDER 269
FOREWORD TO PART SIX 269
CHAPTER ONE: THE INDIA RELATIONSHIP: BETWEEN STRUCTURAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND ACUTE TENSION 270

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 The Architecture of Bilateral Relations: Asymmetry, Interdependence, and History 271
1.2 The "Golden Era" and Its Collapse: 2009 to 2024 271
1.3 The Crisis of 2024-2025: Dimensions and Dynamics 272
1.4 Toward a Reset: The Modi-Yunus Meeting, the February Elections, and the Path Forward 274
1.5 The Theoretical Framework: Structural Realism, Complex Interdependence, and the Bangladesh-India Dyad 274
1.6 Policy Framework: Managing the India Relationship in the Post-Golden Era 275
CHAPTER TWO: THE CHINA RELATIONSHIP: FROM ECONOMIC PARTNER TO COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNER 276
2.1 The Evolution of Bangladesh-China Relations: Historical and Contemporary Overview 276
2.2 The Post-July Revolution Deepening: Yunus's China Visit and Its Strategic Significance 277
2.3 The Defense Dimension: Arms Dependency and Strategic Leverage 278
2.4 The Teesta China Project: A Case Study in Triangular Geopolitics 279
2.5 The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Philosophical and Jurisprudential Assessment 279
CHAPTER THREE: THE MYANMAR BORDER: NON-STATE ACTORS, HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, AND THE COLLAPSE OF CONVENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DIPLOMACY 280
3.1 The Revolutionary Change on Bangladesh's Eastern Border 280
3.2 The Arakan Army and Bangladesh's Security: Threats and Opportunities 281
3.3 The Rohingya Crisis: From Humanitarian Emergency to Security Imperative 282
3.4 Border Security Architecture: The Gap Between Need and Capability 283
CHAPTER FOUR: THE UNITED STATES RELATIONSHIP: BETWEEN STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND DEVELOPMENTAL PARTNERSHIP 284
4.1 The Strategic Logic of US Engagement with Bangladesh 284
4.2 The Tariff Question and Economic Leverage 285
4.3 The St. Martin's Island Question: A Geopolitical Flashpoint 286
4.4 Defense Cooperation Beyond the Bilateral: Bangladesh and Quad-Adjacent Security Architecture 287
4.5 The Philosophical Challenge: Non-Alignment in an Era of Great Power Competition 287
CHAPTER FIVE: MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORKS AND REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE 288
5.1 BIMSTEC: The Bay of Bengal Framework and Its Potential 288
5.2 SAARC's Paralysis and the Search for Alternatives 289
5.3 The Bay of Bengal: Maritime Law, Blue Economy, and Strategic Competition 290
5.4 The Indo-Pacific Outlook: Bangladesh's Conceptual Framework 291

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH MIDDLE POWERS AND THE DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA 291
6.1 Turkey: The New Strategic Partner 291
6.2 Japan, South Korea, and Italy: Building Western-Quality Alternatives 292
6.3 The Gulf States and Islamic Solidarity as a Diplomatic Asset 293
6.4 The Pakistan Reset: Historical Memory, Strategic Logic, and Political Risk 294
CHAPTER SEVEN: SOVEREIGNTY, NON-ALIGNMENT, AND PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR BANGLADESH'S GLOBAL POSITION 295
7.1 The Philosophy of Sovereignty in the Contemporary International Order 295
7.2 The Non-Alignment Tradition: From Nehru to Yunus 296
7.3 The Responsibility to Protect, Humanitarian Intervention, and Bangladesh's Position 296
7.4 International Law, Treaty Obligations, and the Legal Framework of Bangladesh's Global Position 297
CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARD A GRAND STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH: SYNTHESIS, FRAMEWORK, AND THE PATH FORWARD 298
8.1 Defining Grand Strategy for a Small-to-Medium Power 298
8.2 Bangladesh's National Interests: A Clear Statement 299
8.3 The Grand Strategy Framework: Five Pillars 299
8.4 The 2026 Election and the Strategic Continuity Question 300
CONCLUSION TO PART SIX: GEOGRAPHY IS DESTINY AND CHOICE SIMULTANEOUSLY 301
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SIX 302
Bangladesh-India Relations 302
Bangladesh-China Relations 303
Bangladesh-Myanmar and Rohingya Crisis 303
Bangladesh-USA and Indo-Pacific 304
Theoretical and Comparative Sources 304
PART SEVEN: THE LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF NATIONAL SECURITY: LAWS, ORDINANCES, CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, AND THE FRAMEWORK FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE ... 305
FOREWORD TO PART SEVEN 305
CHAPTER ONE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITY GOVERNANCE 307
1.1 Constitutional Provisions Governing Defense and Security: A Close Reading 307
1.2 The Emergency Powers Framework: Article 141A and the Security Exception 308
1.3 Constitutional Civil-Military Relations: The Gap Between Text and Practice 309

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.4 The Constitutional Status of Security Forces Other than the Armed Forces 310
CHAPTER TWO: THE ARMY ACT AND MILITARY JUSTICE: COLONIAL INHERITANCE AND DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT 310
2.1 The Army Act of 1952: An Anachronism in Democratic Governance 311
2.2 The Court Martial System: Structure, Procedure, and Reform 311
2.3 The Proposed Amendments to the Army Act: A Legislative Framework 312
2.4 Military Intelligence Legislation: The DGFI Legal Framework 313
CHAPTER THREE: THE POLICE AND PARAMILITARY SECURITY FORCES: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND REFORM 314
3.1 The Police Act of 1861: A Colonial Law in Democratic Bangladesh 314
3.2 The Rapid Action Battalion: Institutional History, Abuses, and the Case for Abolition 315
3.3 The Border Guard Bangladesh: Legal Framework and Boundary of Authority 316
3.4 The Special Powers Act: A Weapon Against Dissent 317
CHAPTER FOUR: INTELLIGENCE LEGISLATION AND THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SURVEILLANCE 318
4.1 The National Security Intelligence: Legal Framework Gaps 318
4.2 The Necessary Elements of an Intelligence Legal Framework 318
4.3 The Cyber Security Legislative Framework: Between Protection and Repression 319
4.4 The Official Secrets Act: Colonial Secrecy and Democratic Transparency 320
CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENCY LAWS, INTERNAL SECURITY LEGISLATION, AND THE RIGHTS FRAMEWORK 321
5.1 The Special Powers Act and the Preventive Detention Framework 321
5.2 Aid to Civil Power: The Legal Framework for Military Internal Deployment 322
5.3 The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 and Its Reform 323
CHAPTER SIX: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR PROCUREMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT 324
6.1 The Public Procurement Act 2006 and Defense Procurement Exemptions 324
6.2 Draft Provisions for a Defense Procurement Accountability Act 325
6.3 Parliamentary Budget Scrutiny: The Appropriations Framework for Defense 326
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL: JURISDICTION, PROCESS, AND REFORM 327
7.1 The ICT in Historical and Contemporary Context 327
7.2 The Death Penalty and Bangladesh's International Legal Obligations 327
7.3 The ICT and Military Accountability: The October 2025 Arrest Warrants 328

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER EIGHT: DRAFT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR A NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY ACT 329
8.1 The Case for a Consolidated National Security Legal Framework 329
8.2 Draft Framework: The National Defense and Security Act 2026 or 2027 329
8.3 The Jurisprudential Foundation: Legislative Theory and Security Law 331
CHAPTER NINE: INTERNATIONAL LAW OBLIGATIONS AND THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK 332
9.1 Treaty Obligations and Domestic Legislation: The Incorporation Problem 332
9.2 The Rome Statute and International Criminal Court Jurisdiction 333
9.3 The Geneva Convention Implementation: Laws of Armed Conflict in Domestic Law 334
CONCLUSION TO PART SEVEN: LAW AS THE ARCHITECTURE OF ACCOUNTABLE SECURITY 334
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SEVEN 336
Primary Legal Sources 336
Constitutional and Reform Documents 336
Human Rights and Security Sector Reform Reports 337
International and Comparative Legal Sources 337
PART EIGHT: THE THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING: NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES, DEFENSE WHITE PAPERS, FORCE PLANNING DOCUMENTS, AND THE ART OF NECESSITY-BASED POLICY CONSTRUCTION 338
FOREWORD TO PART EIGHT 339
CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING 340
1.1 What Makes a Defense Policy Document: Genre, Function, and Quality 340
1.2 The Hierarchy of Defense Policy Documents 341
1.3 Necessity-Based Drafting: The Philosophical Foundation 342
1.4 The Drafting Process: Institutional Machinery and Democratic Legitimacy 343
CHAPTER TWO: DRAFTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH 344
2.1 Structure and Content Requirements 344
2.2 Draft Text: Bangladesh National Security Strategy 2026 346
CHAPTER THREE: THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: ARCHITECTURE AND DRAFT FRAMEWORK 352
3.1 The Defense White Paper as Strategic Instrument 352
3.2 Draft Framework: Defense White Paper 2026 353
CHAPTER FOUR: THE FORCE PLANNING METHODOLOGY: NEEDS-BASED CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT .. 357
4.1 The Logic of Needs-Based Force Planning 357
4.2 Necessity-Based Assessment of Bangladesh's Major Procurement Decisions 358

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

4.3 Needs-Based Assessment of the NCP Manifesto Defense Proposals 360
CHAPTER FIVE: DRAFTING BILATERAL DEFENSE AGREEMENTS: FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES 360
5.1 The Architecture of Bilateral Defense Agreements 360
5.2 Draft Framework for Bangladesh's ACSA Negotiating Position 361
5.3 Draft Framework for Bangladesh's GSOMIA Negotiating Position 362
CHAPTER SIX: THE INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY FOR DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING 363
6.1 The National Security Council Secretariat: Organization and Mandate 363
6.2 The Strategic Studies Infrastructure: Think Tanks, Universities, and Policy Communities 363
6.3 The Role of Parliament in Defense Policy Deliberation 364
CHAPTER SEVEN: DRAFTING FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY: COMMUNICATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT 365
7.1 The Defense Policy Communication Challenge 365
7.2 The Controversy of Strategic Transparency: What to Disclose and What to Protect 365
CHAPTER EIGHT: SPECIAL TOPICS IN DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING 366
8.1 Drafting for Non-Traditional Security Threats: Climate, Cyber, and Hybrid Warfare 366
8.2 Drafting for Alliance and Partnership Management 367
CONCLUSION TO PART EIGHT: DRAFTING AS A DEMOCRATIC ACT 368
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART EIGHT 369
Defense Policy Drafting Methodology 369
Bangladesh-Specific Policy Documents and Analysis 369
ACSA and GSOMIA: Policy Analysis 370
Comparative Strategic Documents 370
Part Nine: Internal Security Architecture, Non-State Violence, Counter-Extremism, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the Jurisprudence of Legitimate Force 371
FOREWORD TO PART NINE 371
CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNAL SECURITY IN DEMOCRATIC STATES 372
1.1 The Distinction Between Internal and External Security: A False Dichotomy? 372
1.2 The Sociology of Internal Threats: Types, Origins, and Dynamics 373
1.3 Democratic Theory and Internal Security: The Problem of the State Against Itself 374
1.4 The International Legal Framework for Internal Security Operations 375
CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF BANGLADESH'S INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES 376

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.1 From Liberation to Destabilization: Internal Security in the First Decade 376
2.2 The Militarization of Politics and Its Internal Security Consequences 377
2.3 The Rise of Islamist Militancy: From Fringe to Strategic Threat 377
2.4 The Post-July 2024 Security Environment: New Challenges and Old Patterns 378
CHAPTER THREE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: HISTORY, LAW, AND THE UNFINISHED PEACE 380
3.1 Historical Origins of the CHT Conflict: From Colonial Exclusion to National Integration 380
3.2 The Armed Conflict: Shanti Bahini, Military Operations, and the Human Costs 381
3.3 The 1997 CHT Accord: Promise, Implementation, and Failure 382
3.4 The Current Security Situation in the CHT: Multiple Actors, Intersecting Conflicts 383
3.5 Legal Architecture of CHT Governance: Constitutional Status, Special Laws, and Human Rights Obligations 384
CHAPTER FOUR: COUNTER-EXTREMISM ARCHITECTURE: LAW, INSTITUTIONS, AND DEBATES 385
4.1 The Legal Framework for Counter-Extremism: History and Current State 385
4.2 The Institutional Architecture: Multiple Agencies, Coordination Problems 386
4.3 Counter-Extremism Doctrine: The "Whole-of-Society" Approach and Its Limitations 387
4.4 The Madrasah Question: Education, Radicalization, and the Policy Dilemma 389
CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROHINGYA SECURITY NEXUS 390
5.1 From Humanitarian Crisis to Security Challenge 390
5.2 Armed Groups and Criminal Networks in the Rohingya Camps 390
5.3 Policy Responses and Their Limitations 391
CHAPTER SIX: POLICE REFORM, PARAMILITARY FORCES, AND THE SECURITY SECTOR 392
6.1 The Bangladesh Police: History, Problems, and Reform Imperatives 392
6.2 The Border Guard Bangladesh: Frontier Security and Its Challenges 393
6.3 The Rapid Action Battalion: Effectiveness, Controversy, and the Reform Question 394
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE JURISPRUDENCE OF LEGITIMATE INTERNAL FORCE: PHILOSOPHY, LAW, AND ACCOUNTABILITY 395
7.1 The Philosophical Problem: When May the State Kill Its Own People? 395
7.2 The Legal Framework for Use of Force in Internal Security Operations 396
7.3 The Special Problem of Emergency Powers and Security Detention 397
7.4 International Humanitarian Law and Non-International Armed Conflict in Bangladesh 398
CHAPTER EIGHT: INTEGRATING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY: INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND POLICY COHERENCE 399

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

8.1 The National Security Council and Whole-of-Government Coordination 399
8.2 Intelligence Integration: The Case for a National Intelligence Director 399
8.3 Federalism, Decentralization, and Internal Security 400
CHAPTER NINE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: TOWARD A DURABLE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT 401
9.1 Why the CHT Problem Cannot Be Solved by Security Means Alone 401
9.2 The Full Implementation Framework: What Is Required 401
9.3 The KNF Challenge: Engaging the New Armed Groups 402
CHAPTER TEN: LEGISLATIVE REFORM FOR INTERNAL SECURITY 403
10.1 The Case for Comprehensive Internal Security Legislation 403
10.2 Draft Elements of a Bangladesh Internal Security Act 403
10.3 Reform of the Anti-Terrorism Legislation 405
CHAPTER ELEVEN: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS 405
11.1 The Accountability Gap: Why Internal Security Forces Are Not Held Accountable 405
11.2 Mechanisms for Accountability: Domestic and International 406
11.3 Building a Culture of Accountability: The Institutional Reform Agenda 407
CHAPTER TWELVE: SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 408
12.1 The Comprehensive Internal Security Architecture: Key Principles 408
12.2 Specific Policy Recommendations 409
12.3 The Philosophical Foundation: Internal Security as Democratic Service 410
CONCLUSION TO PART NINE: SECURITY WITHOUT IMPUNITY 410
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART NINE 411
Conceptual Framework and Theory 411
Bangladesh Internal Security: History and Analysis 412
Chittagong Hill Tracts: Documents and Analysis 412
Counter-Extremism and Terrorism 413
Rohingya Security Nexus 414
Police Reform and Human Rights Accountability 414
Comparative Internal Security 414
International Law and Internal Security 415
Part Ten: Defense Industrial Policy, Procurement Architecture, Technology Transfer, Supply Chain Dependencies, and the Strategic Vision for Bangladesh's Defense Industrial Development Through 2040 415

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

FOREWORD TO PART TEN 416
CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POLICY 416
1.1 Why Defense Industrial Policy Is a Distinct Category 416
1.2 Classical Economic Theory and Defense Industry: Market Failure, Public Goods, and Strategic Considerations 417
1.3 The Political Economy of Arms Procurement: Principal-Agent Problems and Rent-Seeking 418
1.4 Arms Dependency Theory: The Structural Consequences of Import Reliance 419
CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE 420
2.1 Origins: The Pakistan Era and the Liberation War Legacy 420
2.2 The Chinese Relationship: Arms Supplier, Industrial Partner, and Strategic Complication 420
2.3 The Russia Factor: Declining Relationship, Sanction Risk, and Doctrinal Complication 422
2.4 The Emergence of the Domestic Defense Industrial Base: From Ammunition to Ambition 422
CHAPTER THREE: THE CONTEMPORARY PROCUREMENT LANDSCAPE, 2024 TO 2026 424
3.1 The Fighter Aircraft Decision: History, Politics, and Strategic Stakes 424
3.2 The Air Defense Architecture: Turkey's SiPER and the Regional Implications 426
3.3 Naval Procurement: Indigenous Frigates, Submarine Expansion, and Blue Economy Protection 427
3.4 Army Equipment and the Ground Forces Modernization Challenge 428
CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEFENSE ECONOMIC ZONE AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR ROLE 429
4.1 The Defense Economic Zone Initiative: Rationale, Design, and Challenges 429
4.2 The Drone Sector: Bangladesh's Most Promising Industrial Entry Point 429
4.3 The Shipbuilding Sector: Commercial Assets and Military Applications 430
CHAPTER FIVE: PROCUREMENT GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY 431
5.1 The Procurement Architecture: Legal Framework and Institutional Gaps 431
5.2 Comparative Models of Defense Procurement Governance 431
5.3 The Defense Finance Framework: Budget Reality and Procurement Constraints 432
CHAPTER SIX: ARMS DEPENDENCY, SUPPLY CHAIN VULNERABILITIES, AND STRATEGIC RESILIENCE 433
6.1 Mapping Bangladesh's Supply Chain Dependencies 433
6.2 The Lesson of May 2025: India-Pakistan and Its Bangladesh Implications 434
6.3 Offset Policies and Technology Transfer: Maximizing Industrial Returns from Procurement 435
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE PROCUREMENT IN BANGLADESH 435
7.1 Corruption in Defense Procurement: Manifestations, Mechanisms, and Costs 435

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.2 The Anti-Corruption Framework for Defense Procurement: Legal Instruments and Their Enforcement 436
7.3 Parliamentary Oversight of Defense Procurement: The Democratic Accountability Deficit 437
CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL THEORY AND BANGLADESH'S DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY 438
8.1 The Developmental State and Defense Industry: Lessons from Asia 438
8.2 The BNP Industrial Policy Proposals: Assessment and Analysis 439
8.3 The Role of Defense Economics in Development Strategy 440
CHAPTER NINE: EXPORT STRATEGY AND BANGLADESH'S GLOBAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POSITIONING 441
9.1 Defense Export Opportunities: Where Bangladesh Has Competitive Potential 441
9.2 Regional Defense Cooperation and Industrial Integration 441
CHAPTER TEN: DRAFTING A BANGLADESH DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POLICY 442
10.1 The Case for a Formal Defense Industrial Policy Document 442
10.2 Draft Framework: Bangladesh Defense Industrial Policy 2026-2040 443
CHAPTER ELEVEN: SYNTHESIS, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE LONG VIEW 445
11.1 The Philosophical Dimension: Defense Industry as an Expression of National Values 445
11.2 The Jurisprudential Dimension: Public Procurement Law, Corruption, and Constitutional Obligation 446
11.3 The Vision for 2040: Bangladesh as a Meaningful Defense Industrial Player 446
CONCLUSION TO PART TEN: PRODUCTION AS SOVEREIGNTY 447
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TEN 448
Defense Industrial Policy: Theory and Comparative Studies 448
Bangladesh Defense Industrial Base 448
Fighter Aircraft Procurement 449
Turkey-Bangladesh Defense Partnership 450
Defense Procurement Governance and Corruption 450
Global Defense Industry Context 450
PART ELEVEN: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, CYBER WARFARE, QUANTUM COMPUTING, DIRECTED ENERGY, AND SPACE: THE TECHNOLOGICAL FRONTIER OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE FUTURE 451
FOREWORD TO PART ELEVEN 451
CHAPTER ONE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY DECISION-MAKING: THEORY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE BANGLADESH IMPERATIVE 452

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 The Intelligence Revolution in Military Affairs: Setting the Stage 452
1.2 The Conceptual Taxonomy of Military Artificial Intelligence 453
1.3 Artificial Intelligence and the Epistemological Transformation of Military Intelligence 455
1.4 The Bangladesh National AI Strategy and Its Defense Dimensions 456
1.5 The Jurisprudential Foundations of AI Governance in Defense: Constitutional and International Law Frameworks 457
1.6 The Ethics of Military AI: Philosophical Frameworks and Their Limits 458
CHAPTER TWO: AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS: GLOBAL DEBATES, LEGAL CONTROVERSIES, AND BANGLADESH'S POSITION 460
2.1 The Architecture of the Global Debate 460
2.2 Definitional Controversies: What Is an Autonomous Weapons System? 461
2.3 The Accountability Gap: Who Is Responsible When an Autonomous System Kills Unlawfully? 462
2.4 Bangladesh's Position in International Forums: The Diplomatic Calculus 463
CHAPTER THREE: QUANTUM COMPUTING AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS: DEFENSE, CRYPTOGRAPHY, AND THE COMING DECRYPTION SHOCK 464
3.1 The Quantum Computing Revolution: Technical Foundations for Policy Analysis 464
3.2 The Strategic Implications: Harvest Now, Decrypt Later and the Q-Day Problem 465
3.3 Bangladesh's Quantum Vulnerability: A Structural Assessment 465
3.4 Post-Quantum Cryptography: The Legislative and Institutional Response 466
3.5 The Offensive Dimension: Quantum Sensing and Quantum Communications 467
CHAPTER FOUR: CYBER WARFARE AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL: DOCTRINE, LAW, AND BANGLADESH'S DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY 468
4.1 The Strategic Architecture of Cyber Warfare 468
4.2 The Taxonomy of Cyber Threats to Bangladesh 469
4.3 Bangladesh's Cyber Defense Architecture: An Assessment 470
4.4 The International Legal Framework for Cyber Warfare: The Tallinn Manual and Its Relevance to Bangladesh 470
4.5 Cyber Sovereignty and the Philosophical Dimensions 471
CHAPTER FIVE: DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS: THE NEXT GENERATION OF AIR DEFENSE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH 472
5.1 Directed Energy Weapons: Technical Overview for Strategic Analysis 472
5.2 The Bangladesh Air Defense Modernization Context 473
5.3 High-Power Microwave Systems and Electronic Warfare 474

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: SPACE-BASED ASSETS AND MILITARY OPERATIONS: BANGLADESH'S PLACE IN THE CONTESTED SPACE DOMAIN 475
6.1 The Militarization and Weaponization of Space: Historical and Contemporary Context 475
6.2 Bangladesh's Space Assets: BangaSat-1 and the Military Dimension 476
6.3 The Commercial Satellite Revolution and Bangladesh's Intelligence Capabilities 476
6.4 Anti-Satellite Capabilities and the Space Security Dilemma 477
6.5 The Legal Framework for Military Space Operations: International Law and Bangladesh's Obligations 478
CHAPTER SEVEN: DRONE WARFARE, UNMANNED SYSTEMS, AND THE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE FOR BANGLADESH 478
7.1 The Drone Revolution: From Reconnaissance to Contested Battlespace 479
7.2 Myanmar as a Drone Warfare Laboratory on Bangladesh's Doorstep 479
7.3 Bangladesh's Own UAV Development and Acquisition 480
CHAPTER EIGHT: ELECTRONIC WARFARE, SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE, AND THE INVISIBLE BATTLEFIELD 481
8.1 The Electromagnetic Spectrum as a Strategic Domain 481
8.2 Signals Intelligence and Its Constitutional Constraints 482
CHAPTER NINE: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES: WHAT BANGLADESH NEEDS AND WHAT IT LACKS 483
9.1 The Architecture of the Legislative Gap 483
9.2 A Draft Framework: The National Defense Emerging Technologies Act 483
9.3 The Constitutional Dimension: Articles 31, 32, and the Emerging Technology Frontier 485
CHAPTER TEN: TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES 486
10.1 The Geopolitics of Technology Access 486
10.2 Building an Emerging Technology Research Ecosystem 487
CHAPTER ELEVEN: INFORMATION WARFARE, DISINFORMATION, AND THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF DEFENSE 488
11.1 The Cognitive Domain as a Military Battlespace 488
11.2 Bangladesh's Cognitive Vulnerability 488
11.3 Counter-Disinformation Architecture and Legal Framework 489
CHAPTER TWELVE: DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE DUAL-USE PROBLEM AND EXPORT CONTROLS 490
12.1 The Dual-Use Technology Challenge 490

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

12.2 Bangladesh as a Potential Technology Exporter 491
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE ACCOUNTABILITY IMPERATIVE 491
13.1 How Technology Changes the Civil-Military Balance 491
13.2 The Parliamentary Technology Oversight Function 492
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: REGIONAL DIMENSIONS: SOUTH ASIAN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION AND BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION 493
14.1 India's Military Technology Modernization and the Bangladesh Implications 493
14.2 China's Military Technology Presence in Bangladesh 494
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: TOWARD A BANGLADESH EMERGING TECHNOLOGY DEFENSE DOCTRINE: SYNTHESIS AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 494
15.1 The Principles of Bangladesh's Emerging Technology Defense Doctrine 495
15.2 Draft Policy Framework: The Bangladesh Emerging Technologies Defense Policy Statement 495
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: BANGLADESH'S PHILOSOPHICAL HERITAGE AND THE ETHICS OF EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES 497
16.1 Drawing on Bangladesh's Own Philosophical and Ethical Traditions 497
16.2 The Jurisprudence of Emerging Military Technologies: Toward a Bangladeshi Contribution .. 497
CONCLUSION TO PART ELEVEN: TECHNOLOGY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE FUTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE POLICY 498
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART ELEVEN 499
Artificial Intelligence and Military Operations: Foundational Works 499
Autonomous Weapons: International Law and Ethics 500
Quantum Computing and Cryptography 501
Cyber Warfare and International Law 501
Directed Energy Weapons 502
Space Security and International Law 502
Drone Warfare 502
Information Warfare and Cognitive Warfare 502
Bangladesh Specific Sources 503
Contemporary Global Policy Documents 503
PART TWELVE: BANGLADESH AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING: HISTORY, STRATEGY, LAW, GENDER, MISCONDUCT, CRISIS, AND THE FUTURE OF THE BLUE HELMET 504
FOREWORD TO PART TWELVE 504

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER ONE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PEACEKEEPING AS AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION 505

1.1 The Idea of Collective Security: From Kant to the Covenant 505

1.2 The United Nations Charter and the Architecture of Collective Security 506

1.3 The First Generation of Peacekeeping: UNEF and the Development of Doctrine 507

1.4 The Post-Cold War Transformation: From Classical to Complex Peacekeeping 507

CHAPTER TWO: BANGLADESH'S ENTRY INTO PEACEKEEPING: HISTORY, MOTIVATIONS, AND THE STRATEGIC LOGIC OF THE BLUE HELMET 508

2.1 The Historical Context: 1988 and the Decision to Deploy 508

2.2 The Strategic Motivations: Why Bangladesh Became a Leading Contributor 509

2.3 The Record of Service: Missions, Operations, and Human Cost 510

CHAPTER THREE: THE GENDER DIMENSION OF BANGLADESH'S PEACEKEEPING: ACHIEVEMENT, ASPIRATION, AND UNRESOLVED CONTRADICTIONS 511

3.1 Women Peacekeepers and the UN's Gender Agenda 511

3.2 The Gap Between Aspiration and Achievement: Structural Barriers 512

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LEGAL ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S PEACEKEEPING PARTICIPATION 513

4.1 The International Legal Framework: Status of Forces Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding 513

4.2 The Domestic Legal Framework: Constitutional Authority and Statutory Gaps 514

4.3 Rules of Engagement, Use of Force, and International Humanitarian Law 515

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF PEACEKEEPING: INCENTIVES, DISTORTIONS, AND THE QUESTION OF STRATEGIC COHERENCE 516

5.1 The Financial Architecture: How Peacekeeping Reimbursements Work 516

5.2 The Distortions: When Economic Logic Overrides Strategic Logic 517

5.3 The Foreign Exchange Crisis and Peacekeeping Income: 2024-2026 517

CHAPTER SIX: THE CRISIS OF UN PEACEKEEPING: GREAT POWER COMPETITION, MANDATE FAILURES, AND THE UN80 REFORM PROCESS 518

6.1 The Structural Crisis of the Security Council and Its Peacekeeping Consequences 518

6.2 The Mandate Failure Problem: When Peacekeeping Cannot Keep Peace 519

6.3 The UN80 Reform Process and Its Implications for Bangladesh 520

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ACCOUNTABILITY CRISIS: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN UN PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S RESPONSIBILITIES 521

7.1 The Scale of the Problem: Evidence and History 521

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.2 Bangladesh's Record and Its Responsibilities 522
7.3 The Paternity and Child Support Crisis: Bangladesh's Legal Obligations 523
7.4 Pre-Deployment Training and the Cultural Dimension 523
CHAPTER EIGHT: INFORMATION WARFARE, DISINFORMATION, AND THE COGNITIVE CHALLENGE IN PEACEKEEPING ENVIRONMENTS 524
8.1 The Information Environment of Contemporary Peacekeeping 524
8.2 The Role of Technology in Peacekeeping: AI, UAVs, and the Bangladesh Pledge 525
CHAPTER NINE: THE BRAHIMI LEGACY, THE HIGH-LEVEL INDEPENDENT PANEL, AND THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE 526
9.1 From Brahimi to HIPPO: The Development of Peacekeeping Doctrine 526
9.2 The Pact for the Future and Peacekeeping's Place in the 2030 Vision 527
CHAPTER TEN: PEACEKEEPING AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE BLUE HELMET 527
10.1 Peacekeeping as a Civil-Military Bargaining Resource 527
10.2 The Political Management of Peacekeeping Casualties 528
10.3 The Post-2024 Interim Government and Peacekeeping Policy 529
CHAPTER ELEVEN: PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY: SOFT POWER, INTERNATIONAL STANDING, AND THE LIMITS OF THE BLUE HELMET 529
11.1 Soft Power Theory and the Peacekeeping Contribution 529
11.2 The Limits of Soft Power: When the Blue Helmet Does Not Translate 530
11.3 Peacekeeping and the UN Security Council: Bangladesh's Non-Permanent Membership Ambitions 531
CHAPTER TWELVE: THE ROHINGYA CRISIS AND ITS PEACEKEEPING DIMENSIONS: A SPECIFIC ANALYSIS 531
12.1 The Intersection of Peacekeeping and the Rohingya Crisis 531
12.2 The Case for a UN Monitoring Mission in Myanmar 532
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: PEACEKEEPING LAW AND BANGLADESH'S LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: THE CASE FOR A PEACEKEEPING PARTICIPATION ACT 533
13.1 The Legislative Gap: A Detailed Analysis 533
13.2 The Draft Peacekeeping Participation Act: Key Provisions 533
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE FUTURE ARCHITECTURE OF UN PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING 534
14.1 Scenario Analysis: Three Futures for UN Peacekeeping 535

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

14.2 New Niches: What Bangladesh Can Offer the Evolving Peacekeeping System 535
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PHILOSOPHICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF PEACEKEEPING: WHAT ARE WE REALLY DOING? 536
15.1 The Ethics of Peacekeeping: Deeper Philosophical Questions 537
15.2 The Justice Dimension: Peacekeeping and the Responsibility to Protect 537
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: TOWARD A BANGLADESH PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE: SYNTHESIS AND STRATEGIC VISION 539
16.1 The Principles of Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Doctrine 539
16.2 Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Vision for 2040 540
CONCLUSION TO PART TWELVE: THE BLUE HELMET AND THE SOUL OF BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN POLICY 540
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TWELVE 541
UN Peacekeeping: Foundational and Theoretical Works 541
UN Policy Documents and Reports 542
Women, Peace and Security 542
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 543
Bangladesh Peacekeeping 543
Comparative Peacekeeping Legislation and Civil-Military Relations 544
Current UN Peacekeeping Crisis and Reform 544
Responsibility to Protect 545
Soft Power and Peacekeeping Diplomacy 545
PART THIRTEEN: LEGISLATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM ARCHITECTURE FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE GOVERNANCE: STATUTORY REDESIGN, INSTITUTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION, DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY, AND THE ROAD TO A SOVEREIGN DEFENSE LAW FRAMEWORK 545
FOREWORD TO PART THIRTEEN 546
CHAPTER ONE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 547
1.1 Constitutional Moments in Democratic Theory 547
1.2 The February 2026 Elections and the National Referendum: A New Constitutional Foundation 548
1.3 The Inherited Legislative Framework and Its Deficiencies 549
1.4 The Jurisprudential Foundations of Defense Legislation 550
CHAPTER TWO: THE ANATOMY OF LEGISLATIVE FAILURE: A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS 551

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.1 Why Good Defense Legislation Is Difficult 551
2.2 The Specific Failures of Bangladesh's Legislative Framework 552
2.3 The Political Economy of Reform Resistance 553
CHAPTER THREE: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT: CONCEPT, PRECEDENTS, AND PRINCIPLES 554
3.1 The Concept of a Foundational Defense Statute 554
3.2 Principles for Bangladesh's National Defense Act 556
3.3 The Architecture of the National Defense Act: A Structural Overview 557
CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL LEGISLATION 559
4.1 The Constitutional and Legal Status of the National Security Council 559
4.2 Model Legislation: The National Security Council Act 560
4.3 The National Security Advisor: Role, Appointment, and Accountability 561
4.4 The NSC and Civil-Military Relations: The Critical Interface 561
CHAPTER FIVE: THE PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE COMMITTEE: POWERS, PROCEDURES, AND REFORM 562
5.1 The Current State of Parliamentary Defense Oversight 562
5.2 Legislative Reforms for the Parliamentary Defense Committee 563
5.3 The Oversight of Intelligence: The Parliamentary Intelligence Committee 564
CHAPTER SIX: REFORMING THE MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM 565
6.1 The Philosophy of Military Justice in Democratic States 565
6.2 Bangladesh's Military Justice Framework: Problems and Pathologies 566
6.3 The Military Justice Reform Act: Model Provisions 566
CHAPTER SEVEN: INTELLIGENCE REFORM LEGISLATION: STATUTES FOR THE SHADOWS 567
7.1 The Necessity and Difficulty of Intelligence Legislation 567
7.2 The Intelligence Services Act: Core Provisions 568
7.3 The Controversial Question of Offensive Intelligence Operations 569
CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE PROCUREMENT REFORM LEGISLATION 570
8.1 The Political Economy of Procurement Reform 570
8.2 The Defense Procurement Act: Model Provisions 571
8.3 The Defense Economic Zone and the Legislative Framework for Indigenous Production 572
CHAPTER NINE: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT POSSIBILITIES AND DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 573
9.1 The Constitutional Architecture and Its Defense Governance Implications 573
9.2 Proposed Constitutional Amendments Relating to Defense 574

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

9.3 The Amendment Process: Political Feasibility Analysis 575
CHAPTER TEN: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY WHITE PAPER: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND DRAFTING PRINCIPLES 576
10.1 The White Paper as a Legal Instrument and Policy Document 576
10.2 The Content Requirements for the Defense White Paper 576
10.3 The Drafting Process: Participation, Consultation, and Legitimacy 577
CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE BORDER SECURITY LEGISLATION: A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK 578
11.1 The Legislative Gap in Bangladesh's Border Management Framework 578
11.2 The Proposed Border Security Act: Key Provisions 579
CHAPTER TWELVE: COMPARATIVE MODELS FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM: THE PATH FORWARD FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE 580
12.1 What Comparative Analysis Can and Cannot Tell Us 580
12.2 The South African Model: Defense Oversight in a Post-Authoritarian Democracy 581
12.3 The Indonesian Reform Experience: Lessons for the Long Term 582
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATIVE ROADMAP 583
13.1 Sequencing the Reform Agenda 583
13.2 The Role of Civil Society in Legislative Reform 584
13.3 International Support and Its Appropriate Limits 585
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: DEFENSE JURISPRUDENCE: THE COURTS AND THE SECURITY STATE 585
14.1 Judicial Review of Defense and Security Decisions 585
14.2 The Bangladesh Security Detention Framework: Legislative Reform 586
14.3 Strategic Litigation and Its Role in Defense Law Reform 587
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: DEFENSE POLICY TOWARD 2030 AND BEYOND: THE LEGISLATIVE FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC AMBITION 588
15.1 The $75 Billion Defense Modernization Proposal and Its Legislative Requirements 588
15.2 The Japan Defense Agreement and the Legislative Framework for Technology Transfer 588
15.3 The Eurofighter Decision and Parliamentary Accountability for Major Acquisition Decisions. 589
15.4 Long-Term Vision: Defense Governance and National Development 590
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PHILOSOPHY OF DEFENSE LAW: THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF THE REFORM AGENDA 590
16.1 Returning to Foundations: Why Law Governs Defense 590
16.2 The Rawlsian Framework and Defense Policy 591
16.3 The Communitarian Dimension: Defense, Identity, and Political Community 592

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

16.4 Islamic Political Philosophy and the Governance of Defense 592
CONCLUSION TO PART THIRTEEN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 593
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART THIRTEEN 594
Constitutional Theory and Democratic Defense Governance 594
Comparative Defense Legislation 595
Bangladesh Legislative and Constitutional Sources 595
Intelligence Law and Oversight 596
Military Justice Reform 596
Defense Procurement Reform 596
Islamic Jurisprudence and Political Philosophy 597
Bangladesh Defense Development, 2024 to 2026 597
PART FOURTEEN: OPERATIONAL STRATEGY, FORCE TRANSFORMATION, ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT, AND THE MODEL DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: BANGLADESH IN THE INDO-PACIFIC ERA, 2026 TO 2036 598
FOREWORD TO PART FOURTEEN 598
CHAPTER ONE: THE BNP GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE INHERITANCE AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 599
1.1 The February 2026 Transition and Its Defense Policy Implications 599
1.2 The Indo-Pakistan Conflict of April to May 2025 and Its Strategic Lessons for Bangladesh 601
1.3 The $75 Billion Vision and Its Political Economy 602
CHAPTER TWO: THE INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND BANGLADESH'S POSITION 602
2.1 The Indo-Pacific as Strategic Concept: Content, Contestation, and Bangladesh's Place 602
2.2 The United States Relationship: GSOMIA, ACSA, and the Limits of Engagement 604
2.3 The China Relationship: Dependency, Diversification, and Strategic Entanglement 605
2.4 The Matarbari Deep Sea Port and Its Strategic Dimensions 606
CHAPTER THREE: THE INDIA RELATIONSHIP: STRATEGIC RESET AFTER THE CRISIS 607
3.1 The Structural Sources of Bangladesh-India Tension 607
3.2 The Strategic Reset: What Bangladesh Needs and What It Can Offer 608
3.3 The BSF Killings and the Border Security Dimension 609
CHAPTER FOUR: GRAY ZONE WARFARE AND HYBRID DEFENSE DOCTRINE FOR BANGLADESH 610
4.1 Bangladesh's Specific Gray Zone Vulnerabilities 610
4.2 Bangladesh's Gray Zone Exposures: A Theater Analysis 611
4.3 The Bangladesh Hybrid Defense Doctrine: Core Elements 612

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

4.4 The Electronic Warfare Brigade: A Specific Capability Requirement 613
CHAPTER FIVE: THE BAY OF BENGAL THEATER: MARITIME STRATEGY AND FORCE DEVELOPMENT 614
5.1 The Bay of Bengal as the Central Strategic Theater 614
5.2 The Naval Development Program: Priorities and Requirements 615
5.3 The Submarine Program: Operational Effectiveness and Future Development 616
CHAPTER SIX: THE AIR FORCE TRANSFORMATION AND THE FIGHTER ACQUISITION DECISIONS 616
6.1 The Strategic Logic of the Fighter Aircraft Decision 616
6.2 The Air Defense Architecture: A Comprehensive Assessment 618
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ARMY MODERNIZATION AGENDA: FORCE STRUCTURE AND DOCTRINE 618
7.1 The Army's Evolving Force Structure 619
7.2 The Network-Centric Warfare Transition 619
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ALLIANCE ARCHITECTURE: MANAGING MULTIPLE PARTNERSHIPS 620
8.1 The Japan Partnership: Depth, Precedent, and Strategic Significance 620
8.2 The Turkey Partnership: Drones, Air Defense, and Industrial Cooperation 621
8.3 The Pakistan Rapprochement and Its Defense Implications 622
8.4 The United Kingdom and European Engagement 623
CHAPTER NINE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE UNFINISHED PEACE 623
9.1 The Unimplemented Accord and Its Security Consequences 623
CHAPTER TEN: THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: PROCESS, POLITICS, AND PRECEDENT 624
10.1 Why Bangladesh Has Never Published a White Paper and Why It Must Now 624
10.2 The Model Bangladesh Defense White Paper: Structure and Content 625
CHAPTER ELEVEN: GEOPOLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE SMALL STATE IN A CONTESTED WORLD 629
11.1 The Philosophical Foundation of Strategic Autonomy 629
11.2 The Geopolitics of Vulnerability: Bangladesh's Structural Position 630
CHAPTER TWELVE: TOWARD THE 2036 HORIZON: STRATEGIC VISION AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPIRATION 631
12.1 What Bangladesh Can Become: A Strategic Vision for 2036 631
12.2 The Enduring Questions 632
CONCLUSION TO PART FOURTEEN: THE STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE OF A SOVEREIGN DEFENSE 632
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FOURTEEN 633
Bangladesh's Strategic Environment, 2024 to 2026 633
Bangladesh-India Relations 634

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Gray Zone Warfare and Hybrid Doctrine 634
Bangladesh Defense Modernization 634
Indo-Pacific Strategic Theory 635
Hybrid Warfare and Gray Zone Competition 635
PART FIFTEEN: THE PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE OF DEFENSE STUDIES IN BANGLADESH: BUILDING THE INTELLECTUAL AND PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 636
FOREWORD TO PART FIFTEEN 636
CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF PROFESSIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION 637
1.1 Why Education Is a Defense Investment, Not a Luxury 638
1.2 The Three Functions of Defense Education 639
1.3 The Clausewitzian Imperative: War as a Political Act Requires Political Education 640
1.4 The Pedagogical Revolution in Security Studies: From Cold War Frameworks to Twenty-First Century Challenges 641
CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORY OF DEFENSE EDUCATION AS AN INTELLECTUAL PROJECT 642
2.1 The Institutional Origins of Professional Military Education 642
2.2 The Development of Civilian Defense Studies 643
2.3 South Asian Comparative Experience: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka 644
2.4 Bangladesh's Current Educational Infrastructure: An Honest Assessment 645
CHAPTER THREE: COMPARATIVE MODELS FOR DEFENSE EDUCATION ARCHITECTURE 646
3.1 The Finnish National Defence University: Small State, Comprehensive Vision 646
3.2 The South Korean Defense Model: Industrial Policy, Professional Education, and Academic Research 647
3.3 Australia's Defence College System: Integrating Military, Civilian, and International Perspectives 648
3.4 Israel's Defense Studies Infrastructure: Excellence Under Pressure 649
3.5 The Manohar Parrikar Institute: Lessons from the Indian Experience 649
CHAPTER FOUR: THE CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE STUDIES SYSTEM650
4.1 The Levels of Defense Education: From Basic Training to Advanced Strategic Studies 650
4.2 The Core Curriculum for Democratic Defense Education: Foundational Subjects 651
4.3 The Specific Curriculum Requirements for Civilian Defense Professionals 653
4.4 The Specific Curriculum Requirements for Military Officers at Different Career Stages 654

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY: INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND ACADEMIC ARCHITECTURE 655
5.1 The Case for a Bangladesh National Defense University 656
5.2 The Academic Structure of the Proposed Bangladesh National Defence University 657
5.3 The Research Mandate and Publication Requirements 658
5.4 The Governance Architecture of the Bangladesh National Defence University 659
CHAPTER SIX: THE THINK TANK ECOSYSTEM: INDEPENDENT DEFENSE RESEARCH FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE 660
6.1 The Role of Independent Think Tanks in Democratic Defense Governance 660
6.2 The Design of an Independent Bangladesh Defense Research Institute 660
6.3 The Comparative Research Agenda: What Bangladesh Needs to Know 661
CHAPTER SEVEN: LEGAL EDUCATION FOR DEFENSE GOVERNANCE 663
7.1 The Jurisprudential Gap in Bangladesh's Legal Education 663
7.2 International Humanitarian Law as an Operational Discipline 664
7.3 The Military Legal Service: Institutional Design and Curriculum Requirements 665
CHAPTER EIGHT: PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE OVERSIGHT 665
8.1 The Parliamentary Knowledge Deficit and Its Consequences 665
8.2 The Parliamentary Staff Training Program for Defense Oversight 666
8.3 Parliamentary Research Services for Defense 667
CHAPTER NINE: CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON DEFENSE 667
9.1 The Role of an Informed Public in Democratic Defense Governance 667
9.2 Defense Journalism: Building Specialized Reporting Capacity 668
9.3 Civil Society Organizations and Defense Accountability 669
CHAPTER TEN: PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND THE DEMOCRATIC VALUES IMPERATIVE 670
10.1 The Challenge of Instilling Democratic Values in Military Institutions 670
10.2 The Case of the 2009 Pilkhana Mutiny and Its Educational Lessons 671
10.3 The BMA Curriculum and Its Reform Requirements 672
CHAPTER ELEVEN: INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEFENSE EDUCATION 673
11.1 The Strategic Value of International Defense Education Engagement 673
11.2 The Bangladesh-NESA Partnership and Its Expansion Potential 674
11.3 The Role of International Organizations in Defense Education Support 675

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE CURRICULUM FOR INTELLIGENCE STUDIES AND DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY 675
12.1 Intelligence Education as a Democratic Imperative 675
12.2 The Specific Curriculum for Intelligence Governance Professionals 676
12.3 Open Source Intelligence in the Digital Age 677
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE STRATEGIC STUDIES RESEARCH AGENDA FOR BANGLADESH 678
13.1 Priority Research Questions for Bangladesh's Strategic Studies Community 678
13.2 The Methodology of Security Studies Research for Bangladesh 679
13.3 International Research Collaboration and Bangladesh's Strategic Studies Contribution 680
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CONTROVERSIES IN DEFENSE EDUCATION: CONTESTED QUESTIONS AND NECESSARY DEBATES 681
14.1 The Debate About Military Autonomy and Civilian Interference in Professional Education 681
14.2 The Religious Identity Controversy in Defense Education 682
14.3 The Colonial Curriculum Controversy 683
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: DEFENSE EDUCATION AND THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC CULTURE 684
15.1 Strategic Culture: Formation, Function, and Reform 684
15.2 The Generational Dimension of Strategic Culture Change 685
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE INTEGRATED VISION FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE STUDIES ECOSYSTEM IN 2036 686
16.1 The Target Institutional Architecture 686
16.2 The Legislative Requirements for Defense Education Reform 687
16.3 The Philosophical Synthesis: Education as Sovereignty 687
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FIFTEEN 689
Theory of Defense Education and Professional Military Education 689
Strategic Culture Theory 689
Comparative Defense Education Institutions 689
Bangladesh Defense Education 690
International Humanitarian Law Education 690
Intelligence Studies and Education 690
Civil Society and Democratic Defense Governance 691
Bangladesh Specific Sources 691

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Sixteen: The Philosophical Synthesis, Grand Strategy, Democratic Covenants, and the Complete Architecture of Bangladesh's Defense Future 691

FOREWORD TO PART SIXTEEN 692

CHAPTER ONE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS - SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY, AND THE DEMOCRATIC COVENANT 693

1.1 Returning to First Principles 693

1.2 The First Claim: Democratic Legitimacy Is a Strategic Asset 694

1.3 The Second Claim: Security and Liberty Are Complements, Not Rivals 695

1.4 The Third Claim: Strategic Culture Must Be Reconstructed 696

1.5 The Fourth Claim: The Jurisprudential Foundation of Defense Law 697

CHAPTER TWO: THE GEOPOLITICAL VERDICT - BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION IN 2026 AND BEYOND 698

2.1 The Strategic Geography That Does Not Change 698

2.2 The India Relationship: From Golden Chapter to Strategic Recalibration 699

2.3 The China Relationship: Arms, Infrastructure, and the Limits of Engagement 701

2.4 The Myanmar Border: The Chronic Emergency 702

2.5 The Bay of Bengal: The Maritime Strategic Imperative 703

CHAPTER THREE: THE LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE - THE COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT 704

3.1 The Legislative Lacuna and Why It Must Be Filled 704

3.2 The Architecture of the National Defense Act: Core Provisions 705

3.3 The Intelligence Reform Act: A Companion Legislation 708

3.4 The Defense Budget Transparency Act 709

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DOCTRINE OF CALIBRATED DETERRENCE - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BANGLADESH'S MILITARY STRATEGY 709

4.1 The Doctrinal Vacuum and the Need to Fill It 709

4.2 The Strategic Concept: Defensive Deterrence with Diplomatic Primacy 710

4.3 The Force Development Implications of Calibrated Deterrence 711

4.4 The Doctrine of Gray Zone Defense 712

4.5 The Nuclear Dimension: Managing the Neighborhood's Strategic Reality 713

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GRAND STRATEGY FRAMEWORK - AN INTEGRATED VISION FOR 2026 TO 2040 714

5.1 Grand Strategy and Its Requirements 714

5.2 The Five Strategic Objectives 714

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

5.3 The Diplomatic Framework: Institutional Architecture for Grand Strategy Implementation 717
CHAPTER SIX: THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS - INTERNATIONAL LAW, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND THE ETHICS OF FORCE 718
6.1 Bangladesh's International Legal Commitments and Their Defense Policy Implications 718
6.2 The Human Rights Framework and Defense Operations 719
6.3 The Ethics of Force: Just War Theory Revisited 720
6.4 Controversies: The Extrajudicial Killing Question and Bangladesh's Record 721
CHAPTER SEVEN: SEVERAL DRAFT DEFENSE POLICY FRAMEWORKS - NECESSITY-BASED DRAFTING .. 722
7.1 The Drafting Methodology: Necessity-Based Policy Formulation 722
7.2 Draft One: The National Defense Policy Statement 723
7.3 Draft Two: Defense White Paper Framework 726
7.4 Draft Three: National Defense Act - Preamble and Key Provisions 727
7.5 Draft Four: Defense Procurement Policy Directive 731
7.6 Draft Five: Bangladesh Defense Doctrine Statement 733
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE GLOBAL DIPLOMATIC FRAMEWORK - BANGLADESH IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER 736
8.1 The Multilateral Architecture and Bangladesh's Strategic Position 736
8.2 The Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework and Bangladesh's Positioning 736
8.3 The BIMSTEC Framework: Bangladesh's Most Promising Regional Architecture 737
8.4 The Ganges Waters Treaty: A Defense Issue by Another Name 738
CHAPTER NINE: BENCHMARKS AND THE DECADE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE, 2026 TO 2036 739
9.1 The Case for Measurable Benchmarks 739
9.2 Immediate Priorities: 2026 to 2028 739
9.3 Medium-Term Development Targets: 2028 to 2032 740
9.4 Long-Term Transformation Indicators: 2032 to 2036 740
CHAPTER TEN: THE ENDURING QUESTIONS - PHILOSOPHICAL CONCLUSIONS 741
10.1 Questions That Policy Cannot Finally Resolve 741
10.2 The Liberation's Unfinished Promise 744
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SIXTEEN 745
Philosophy of Security and Defense 745
International Law and Defense 746

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh Defense and Strategic Affairs, 2024 to 2026 747
Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Defense Governance 748
Comparative Small State Security 748
Water Security and Environmental Dimensions 748
Grand Strategy and Strategic Culture 749

Copyright Page
Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks
First Edition, 2026

Author: S M Nazmuz Sakib
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19565766

Copyright © 2026 by S M Nazmuz Sakib
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Disclaimer
This textbook is prepared for advanced academic, legislative, policy research, and strategic studies audiences. The content represents the author's analysis and scholarly synthesis of available information as of the publication date. The draft policy frameworks, legislative proposals, and strategic recommendations contained herein are analytical and educational documents designed to stimulate critical thinking and policy discussion; they do not constitute official policy guidance of any government entity. Readers are encouraged to consult primary sources directly and to engage critically with all frameworks presented.

Cataloguing Information
This work is registered with Zenodo under the DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19565766. The complete work may be accessed and cited via this persistent identifier.

Suggested Citation
Sakib, S. M. N. (2026). *Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures, and Frameworks* (First Edition). Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19565766

Acknowledgments
This textbook draws on scholarly literature, primary legal and constitutional sources, strategic policy documents, and the comparative experience of states examined throughout the sixteen parts. The author acknowledges the intellectual contributions of the defense studies community in Bangladesh and internationally, upon whose work this synthesis builds.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part One: Foundations of Defense Policy, Theory, Philosophy, History, and the Architecture of Strategic Thought

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART ONE

This textbook is born from an urgent intellectual and practical necessity. Bangladesh stands at a crossroads of history, geography, and geopolitics unlike any it has faced since the birth of the nation in 1971. The July Revolution of 2024, which ended fifteen years of Awami League governance under Sheikh Hasina and ushered in an interim government led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, did not merely alter the political landscape. It forced a wholesale reconsideration of Bangladesh's strategic identity, its defense relationships, its military doctrine, its legislative architecture, and its place in the global order of the twenty-first century.

At the same time, the neighborhood around Bangladesh is convulsing. Myanmar is locked in a brutal civil war whose violence, displaced populations, and armed non-state actors wash across the border into Cox's Bazar and the southeastern reaches of Bangladesh with devastating regularity. The Arakan Army controls significant swaths of the Rakhine State and has demonstrated an unsettling willingness to project violence across the Naf River. India, the enormous neighbor to the north, west, and east, has complex and at times deeply fraught relations with Dhaka that blend deep economic interdependence with historical grievances, border disputes, and asymmetric power dynamics. China, meanwhile, is the principal arms supplier and a major development financier, threading a geopolitical needle that Dhaka must handle with extraordinary care. The Bay of Bengal, once a relatively quiet maritime space, is now one of the most contested strategic seascapes in the Indo-Pacific.

Into this environment, Bangladesh must craft a defense policy that is not merely reactive but visionary. Such a policy must rest on firm intellectual foundations, on a clear understanding of its own constitutional mandate, on the lessons of its history, on a sophisticated reading of international law and global strategic theory, and on the practical realities of limited budgets, growing threats, and a citizenry that demands both security and democratic accountability for the resources spent in its name.

This textbook provides those foundations. Part One is the most expansive and deliberately so. It constructs the intellectual architecture upon which the subsequent fifteen parts will build. It investigates the philosophical origins of the concept of defense itself, examines how defense policy has been theorized across centuries and civilizations, traces the specific historical evolution of Bangladesh's security environment from the colonial period through liberation and beyond, excavates the constitutional and legislative framework that governs and constrains defense policymaking in Bangladesh, analyzes the geopolitical pressures that shape strategic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

choices, and begins the jurisprudential inquiry into how law and defense policy interact in democratic states.

The reader will find this part demanding but rewarding. It does not offer simple answers because none exist. It offers instead the conceptual tools and the historical understanding necessary to engage seriously with the questions that will occupy Bangladesh's strategic community for the next quarter century.

No "simple bullets" will be found in this analysis. Defense policy is not a checklist. It is a living, contested, philosophically charged, legally constrained, politically shaped, and geographically determined enterprise. The ambition of this text is to honor that complexity while still making it navigable.

CHAPTER ONE: THE IDEA OF DEFENSE - PHILOSOPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ORIGINS

1.1 What Is Defense? The Question Before the Policy

Before any nation can craft a defense policy, it must answer a question so fundamental that it is almost always skipped: what does it mean to defend? This is not merely a rhetorical opening. The answer to this question determines everything that follows, from the size and character of the armed forces to the legal instruments that authorize their use, from the diplomatic postures that reduce threats to the industrial policies that sustain military capability.

In ordinary usage, defense means protection against attack. But this apparently simple definition conceals profound complexities. Does defense mean territorial protection alone, or does it extend to the protection of citizens abroad? Does it include the defense of economic interests, of maritime trade routes, of digital infrastructure, of cultural identity? When does defense shade into deterrence, and when does deterrence become aggression? Can a state defend itself by attacking the sources of threats before those threats materialize, or does this violate the foundational principle of self-defense?

These are not merely academic puzzles. They are the contested terrain on which actual defense policy is built, and they have profound legal, ethical, and geopolitical consequences. A narrow definition of defense leads to a purely reactive military posture. A broad definition, carelessly applied, becomes a license for imperial adventurism.

1.2 The Philosophical Heritage: From Antiquity to Modernity

The intellectual history of defense thought stretches back to the earliest human reflections on political community and organized violence.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

In ancient India, Kautilya's Arthashastra, composed roughly between the fourth and third centuries BCE, provided one of the world's first systematic treatments of statecraft and military strategy. Kautilya's approach was frank and unsentimental: the state exists in an environment of potential predation, and the king's first duty is to protect his subjects. The Mandala theory of neighboring states, which Kautilya articulated with geometric precision, described the international system as a series of concentric circles in which immediate neighbors are natural rivals and the neighbors of neighbors are potential allies. This ancient insight about structural enmity based on proximity prefigures the modern concept of the security dilemma and remains astonishingly relevant to Bangladesh's strategic geography.

The Chinese tradition, exemplified by Sun Tzu's Art of War, contributed a different but equally durable insight: that the highest form of military excellence is to subdue the enemy without fighting. Sun Tzu's emphasis on intelligence, deception, the exploitation of terrain, and the undermining of the adversary's will before engaging their forces directly speaks to the constraints that a relatively smaller power like Bangladesh faces when confronted with much larger neighbors. The wise state does not always fight on terms set by the adversary; it shapes the environment to multiply its advantages.

In the Western classical tradition, Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War provided the foundational text of international relations realism. His identification of the Athenian thesis, namely that the strong do what they can while the weak suffer what they must, is both a description and a warning. The Melian Dialogue, in which Athens demands the submission of a neutral city-state and destroys it when that demand is refused, poses a permanent question to small and medium powers: how does a state like Melos, or Bangladesh, preserve its sovereignty against the structural pressures exerted by much greater powers?

Plato and Aristotle offered more normative frameworks. For Plato, the guardians of the ideal republic must possess both the courage to defend and the philosophical wisdom to understand what is truly worth defending. This insight, that military capability without ethical clarity is dangerous, is directly relevant to discussions of civil-military relations and democratic control of the armed forces. Aristotle's more empirical approach recognized that different political constitutions generate different defense imperatives: a democracy defends different things in different ways than a monarchy or an oligarchy.

The Roman tradition added the concept of just war, jus bellum, which Cicero articulated in terms that would resonate through centuries of subsequent thought. For Cicero, war was legitimate only when declared by proper authority, undertaken for a just cause, and conducted with restraint. This framework, much refined and systematized by Christian theologians from Augustine through Aquinas, became the intellectual foundation of what we now call international humanitarian law. Its implications for Bangladesh's defense policy are direct: the legitimacy of defensive force is not merely a military question but a moral and legal one.

1.3 The Medieval and Early Modern Synthesis

Saint Augustine of Hippo, writing in the collapsing world of the late Western Roman Empire, grappled with the question of whether a Christian could justifiably take up arms. His answer was

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

carefully qualified: war could be just if it aimed to restore a violated peace, if it was authorized by legitimate authority, and if it was conducted with the right interior intention. Augustine's framework introduced what would become a permanent tension in defense policy: the relationship between the universal claims of moral law and the particular claims of political sovereignty.

Thomas Aquinas, building on Augustine in the thirteenth century, systematized just war theory into three conditions that remain standard references in contemporary international law discussions: legitimate authority, just cause, and right intention. To these three conditions, later just war theorists, particularly Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez in the sixteenth century, added the requirements of proportionality and last resort. These conditions are directly embedded, in secularized form, in the United Nations Charter and in the customary international law of armed conflict.

Niccolo Machiavelli offered a brutal correction to the idealism of the scholastic tradition. In The Prince and the Discourses, he argued that political communities must be ruthlessly realistic about the role of force in international life. A prince who is not prepared to use force will be destroyed by those who are. States that do not maintain strong armies will be at the mercy of those that do. Machiavelli's analysis is not a celebration of violence but a description of political necessity, and it contains a specific warning that small states ignore at their peril: a state that relies entirely on mercenary or allied forces, rather than its own citizen-soldiers, is structurally vulnerable.

Thomas Hobbes, writing in the shadow of the English Civil War, provided the philosophical foundation for the modern state and its monopoly on legitimate violence. In the state of nature, Hobbes argued, life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short, because every person is at war with every other. The social contract transfers the natural right of individual self-defense to the sovereign, who provides collective security in exchange for obedience. At the international level, Hobbes recognized, no such sovereign exists: states remain in a condition of permanent potential war with each other. This Hobbesian insight is the bedrock of realist international relations theory and explains why states cannot simply disarm even when they wish to.

John Locke offered a more limited and rights-oriented account of political authority, including the authority to make war. For Locke, government exists to protect natural rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property. When government fails to protect these rights, or when it actively violates them, the people retain the right of revolution. Locke's framework has profound implications for civil-military relations: the armed forces of a democratic state exist to protect the rights of citizens, not the interests of rulers. When armies are used against their own people, they have fundamentally violated their constitutional purpose. This principle is directly relevant to Bangladesh's own tortured history of military coups and politically motivated security operations.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, reacting against both Hobbes and Locke, located the source of human conflict not in human nature but in social institutions and inequality. His insight that war is a relationship between states rather than between individuals was deeply influential on subsequent international law. Rousseau also introduced the concept of the general will, which raises

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

important questions about democratic accountability in defense policy: whose security is the state actually securing, and who has the authority to make decisions about war and peace?

Immanuel Kant's contribution to defense theory is both the most ambitious and the most contested. In Perpetual Peace, written in 1795, Kant argued that a federation of republican states could gradually eliminate war by creating institutional mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution. Kant's conditions for perpetual peace, including representative government, a federation of free states, and cosmopolitan law, are the direct intellectual ancestors of the United Nations system, international human rights law, and the democratic peace theory. They also raise profound questions about Bangladesh's own democratic trajectory: can a state that struggles to maintain democratic governance domestically effectively participate in the international institutional order that requires democracy as a baseline?

1.4 Modern Strategic Thought: Clausewitz, Mahan, Douhet, and Beyond

Carl von Clausewitz, writing in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, produced in On War the most influential single work of modern strategic theory. His central insight, that war is the continuation of politics by other means, immediately repositionizes the entire concept of defense. War is not an autonomous phenomenon governed by its own internal logic; it is an instrument of political purpose. This means that defense policy cannot be separated from political policy. The military exists to serve political ends, and when military action is disconnected from clear political purpose, it generates what Clausewitz called "friction" that degrades and ultimately defeats the military effort.

Clausewitz's concept of the fog of war, the irreducible uncertainty that pervades military operations, is equally important for policy. It means that no defense plan survives contact with reality unchanged, and that the institutional capacity to adapt, to learn, and to revise is as strategically important as any particular weapons system or tactical doctrine.

Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American naval historian and strategist, provided in The Influence of Sea Power Upon History (1890) the theoretical foundation for naval strategy that remains relevant in the age of contested maritime spaces. Mahan argued that great powers are made by sea power: the capacity to control sea lanes, protect trade, project force at a distance, and deny these capabilities to adversaries. For Bangladesh, sitting at the head of the Bay of Bengal with a coastline of nearly 580 kilometers and an Exclusive Economic Zone of some 118,813 square kilometers, Mahan's insights are not merely historical curiosities. They are prescient strategic guides.

Giulio Douhet, the Italian air power theorist, argued in The Command of the Air (1921) that future wars would be decided by airpower, which could bypass armies and navies entirely to strike directly at the enemy's industrial and civilian capacity to wage war. While Douhet's more extreme predictions have not been borne out, the centrality of air power to modern military operations is undeniable. For Bangladesh, whose air force is one of the weaker links in its military triad, Douhet's framework highlights a critical vulnerability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

In the twentieth century, nuclear strategy introduced a fundamentally new category of defense theory. Deterrence theory, developed by figures such as Bernard Brodie, Herman Kahn, and Thomas Schelling, argued that in the nuclear age, the primary military purpose was not to win wars but to prevent them, by ensuring that any potential aggressor faced unacceptable costs. While Bangladesh is not a nuclear power and has no credible near-term path to becoming one, it operates in a neighborhood that includes two nuclear-armed states, India and Pakistan, and a third, China, that is a major partner. The logic of extended deterrence and nuclear umbrellas is therefore directly relevant to Dhaka's strategic calculus.

1.5 Contemporary Strategic Theory: Hybrid War, Gray Zone Operations, and Multi-Domain Conflict

The twenty-first century has produced a new generation of strategic concepts that reflect the changed character of contemporary conflict. Perhaps the most influential is the concept of hybrid warfare, which refers to the deliberate blending of conventional military operations, irregular warfare, information operations, cyber attacks, economic coercion, and political subversion in ways that complicate both attribution and response.

Russia's operations in Ukraine beginning in 2014, and the subsequent full-scale invasion in 2022, provided the most dramatic contemporary illustration of hybrid warfare, though the concept itself draws on much earlier precedents including China's "unrestricted warfare" doctrine articulated by Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui in 1999. For Bangladesh, hybrid warfare is not merely a theoretical concern. Its geographic position, its economic dependencies, its internal ethnic and political fault lines, and its information environment all make it potentially vulnerable to gray zone operations by state actors pursuing strategic goals short of open military conflict.

The concept of the gray zone itself, the space between normal peacetime competition and open armed conflict, is increasingly important in regional security analysis. Gray zone activities include economic coercion, information campaigns, support to non-state armed groups, cyber operations, salami-slicing territorial encroachments, and the manipulation of political processes. Bangladesh's experience with political interference from regional powers, whether direct or indirect, provides ample material for a gray zone analysis.

Multi-domain operations, a concept developed by the United States Army but now widely adopted across military establishments, recognizes that modern military competition occurs simultaneously across land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace, and that operational advantage comes from the ability to integrate effects across all these domains faster than an adversary can respond. This framework has important implications for how Bangladesh thinks about the organization, equipment, and doctrine of its armed forces, all of which are currently structured along traditional single-service lines.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND ITS EVOLUTION

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.1 Defining National Security: The Contested Terrain

National security, as a formal policy concept, emerged in the United States in the immediate post-World War II period, crystallized in the National Security Act of 1947 that created the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Council. But the concept it articulated was not new: every state throughout history has been concerned with securing its survival and the conditions necessary for its continued existence.

The traditional definition of national security focused almost exclusively on the military dimension: protecting the territorial integrity of the state and the physical safety of its citizens from external attack. This narrow definition was already being challenged by the 1970s as analysts began to recognize that states could be threatened in ways that military force was poorly equipped to address: resource scarcity, economic collapse, environmental degradation, mass migration, and internal political fragmentation.

The expansion of the national security concept gained intellectual momentum in the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War. Barry Buzan's People, States and Fear (1983, 1991) was seminal in this regard. Buzan proposed a five-sector framework for understanding security, encompassing the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental dimensions. His concept of the "referent object" of security, asking not just "security for whom" but "security from what," fundamentally broadened the analytical scope of security studies.

The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report of 1994 introduced the concept of human security, which shifted the referent object of security from the state to the individual. Human security identified seven dimensions of individual wellbeing: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. This framework has been controversial because it potentially dilutes the concept of security to the point of meaninglessness, but it has been influential in shaping international humanitarian norms and development frameworks.

For Bangladesh, the question of which concept of national security to adopt is not merely academic. A state-centric security conception, focused primarily on territorial defense and military capability, leads to one set of policy priorities. A human security conception, focused on protecting individual Bangladeshis from the full range of threats to their wellbeing, leads to a potentially very different allocation of resources and institutional focus. In practice, Bangladesh requires a synthesis: a framework that takes both the state-level military dimension and the human security dimension seriously, recognizing that they are deeply interconnected.

2.2 The Security Dilemma and Its Application to Bangladesh

The security dilemma is one of the most important concepts in international relations theory. First articulated in its modern form by John Herz in 1950 and developed by Robert Jervis in Perception and Misperception in International Politics (1976), the security dilemma describes a structural dynamic in which the actions that one state takes to increase its own security inevitably

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

decrease the security of its neighbors, provoking countermeasures that ultimately leave both states less secure than before.

The logic is straightforward. State A, concerned about threats, builds up its military forces. State B, observing State A's military expansion, cannot be certain whether this expansion is purely defensive or has offensive applications. To be safe, State B expands its own forces. State A, observing State B's military expansion, feels less secure than before and expands further. The cycle continues, potentially ending in arms races, crises, and wars that neither state originally wanted.

The security dilemma applies with particular force to Bangladesh's strategic environment. Bangladesh's Forces Goal 2030, designed to transform the Bangladeshi Armed Forces into a modern and versatile military force, has introduced new dimensions of competition with both India and Myanmar. Army Recognition From India's perspective, Bangladeshi military modernization, particularly the acquisition of Chinese submarines, corvettes, and potentially advanced fighter aircraft, may appear threatening regardless of Bangladesh's defensive intent. From Bangladesh's perspective, India's military superiority is so overwhelming that even substantial modernization merely reduces the asymmetry rather than creating a balanced deterrent.

The security dilemma generates a permanent tension at the heart of defense policy: sufficient military capability to deter aggression without stimulating escalatory responses from neighbors. Threading this needle requires both military planning and diplomatic skill of the highest order.

2.3 Deterrence Theory and Its Relevance to a Small-to-Medium Power

Deterrence theory, as developed primarily in the nuclear context during the Cold War, has been adapted for application to conventional military competition among states of varying capabilities. Classic deterrence theory distinguishes between deterrence by denial, making an attack militarily unsuccessful, and deterrence by punishment, making an attack politically and economically too costly to pursue regardless of military outcome.

For Bangladesh, deterrence by denial is limited by the stark asymmetry between its military capabilities and those of its larger neighbors. Bangladesh cannot plausibly deny India or China a military victory in a hypothetical conflict through conventional military means alone. What Bangladesh can do is raise the cost of such a conflict sufficiently high that no rational calculation would support the decision to attack. This is essentially deterrence by punishment in a conventional, rather than nuclear, framework.

The conditions for successful conventional deterrence are well understood. The defending state must possess the capability to impose significant costs, it must demonstrate the will to use that capability, and the potential aggressor must believe both the capability and the will are real. Bangladesh's modernization program, including the acquisition of anti-ship missiles for its naval vessels, surface-to-surface missile systems for its army, advanced air defense systems from Turkey, and potentially advanced multi-role fighter aircraft, is best understood as an effort to build credible deterrence rather than war-fighting capability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The combination of medium-range and long-range air defense systems creates an integrated air defense shield that, for the first time, would give Bangladesh the ability to deny its airspace, raising the cost of any potential aggression to a level that demands serious reconsideration by potential adversaries. Asia Times

2.4 The Concept of Strategic Autonomy

Strategic autonomy refers to the capacity of a state to make independent decisions about its security without being constrained or compelled by external powers. For a state like Bangladesh, situated between powerful neighbors and dependent on external arms suppliers, strategic autonomy is not a binary condition but a spectrum.

Complete strategic autonomy, the ability to act entirely without regard to the preferences of more powerful states, is available only to states with overwhelming military and economic power. For Bangladesh, the relevant question is not how to achieve complete strategic autonomy but how to maximize the degree of autonomy available within the constraints of its situation.

Given its policy of non-alignment and strategic balancing with international and regional powers, a military with professional manpower and modern equipment has always been a crucial ambition for enhancing Bangladesh's deterrence. The Diplomat This principle of strategic balancing, sometimes called "hedging" in the academic literature, is the deliberate cultivation of multiple relationships with competing powers in order to avoid excessive dependence on any single patron.

The intellectual tradition behind strategic autonomy draws on the Bandung Conference of 1955, the founding moment of the Non-Aligned Movement, at which newly independent states from Asia and Africa proclaimed their refusal to subordinate their foreign policies to either the American or Soviet blocs. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, was deeply sympathetic to this tradition, and "friendship with all, malice toward none" was his foundational foreign policy principle. This principle has survived every change of government in Bangladesh, though the specific ways in which it has been implemented have varied considerably.

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORY AND THE MAKING OF BANGLADESH'S SECURITY IDENTITY

3.1 The Colonial Legacy and Its Security Implications

To understand Bangladesh's defense environment, one must begin not in 1971 but much earlier, in the long history of Bengal and its colonial transformation. Bengal, the rich deltaic region at the eastern end of the Indian subcontinent, was one of the wealthiest and most densely populated regions of the Mughal Empire. Its conquest by the British East India Company, formalized after

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the Battle of Plassey in 1757, inaugurated a colonial relationship that would fundamentally reshape the political, economic, and security landscape of the region.

The colonial period established several structural features that remain relevant to contemporary defense policy. First, it created the tradition of a professional, apolitical military subordinate to civilian authority, specifically the British Crown and its Indian representatives. The Bengal Army, though its composition changed dramatically after the 1857 Mutiny, was organized according to principles of professional military service distinct from political loyalty. These institutional traditions, filtered through the Pakistani period, shaped the initial character of the Bangladesh Army after independence.

Second, the colonial period established external dependence as the normal condition for the region's security. The Bengal Presidency could not defend itself; its security depended entirely on British power. This structural dependence was replicated in the Pakistani period, when East Pakistan's security was theoretically guaranteed by the Pakistani state but practically provided by a military dominated by West Pakistani officers who regarded the Bengali population with a mixture of condescension and suspicion. The trauma of 1971, when the Pakistani military turned genocidal violence against the very civilian population it was constitutionally obliged to protect, created a profound and lasting ambivalence about the relationship between military power and popular sovereignty that runs through every aspect of Bangladesh's security culture.

Third, the colonial period bequeathed a set of laws, institutions, and administrative practices that continue to shape Bangladesh's legal and institutional landscape. The Colonial-era Official Secrets Act, the Special Powers Act's lineage from the British Defence of India Rules, the Army Act and its disciplinary framework, and much of the administrative structure of the defence ministry all trace their origins to British colonial practice. Understanding Bangladesh's contemporary defense legislative framework requires understanding these colonial roots.

3.2 Partition, Pakistan, and the Security of East Bengal

The partition of British India in 1947 created Pakistan as a Muslim-majority state divided into two geographically separated wings, East and West Pakistan, separated by more than 1,600 kilometers of Indian territory. This extraordinary political arrangement, unprecedented in modern history, created structural security problems from the very beginning that would eventually prove fatal to Pakistani unity.

East Pakistan contained the majority of Pakistan's population, concentrated in the Bangladesh territory that would eventually become independent. It generated substantial foreign exchange through jute exports. Yet it was governed from West Pakistan by a power structure that systematically excluded Bengalis from the upper ranks of the military, the civil service, and the economic elite. The Pakistan Army, overwhelmingly staffed by Punjabis, Pathans, and other West Pakistani groups, regarded East Pakistan less as a co-equal partner in a federal republic than as a strategic liability and economic resource to be managed and exploited.

The security architecture of East Pakistan reflected this power imbalance. The military garrison in the East was relatively small and was understood primarily as a tool of internal control rather

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

than external defense. The eastern wing had no meaningful capacity to defend itself against external attack from India; that was theoretically the responsibility of the Pakistan Army as a whole, which would defend both wings simultaneously. This arrangement left East Pakistan in a position of profound structural insecurity, dependent for its external defense on a state apparatus that was simultaneously its primary internal oppressor.

The Language Movement of 1952, in which Dhaka students died demanding the recognition of Bengali as a state language, was among the first major expressions of Bengali political consciousness against Pakistani domination. The subsequent political movements, including the Six Points Program of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1966, which demanded genuine provincial autonomy and separate foreign exchange accounts for East Pakistan, constituted not merely a political program but a security program: a demand for the capacity to provide for one's own security rather than depending on a distant and hostile central government.

The election of December 1970, in which the Awami League won an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, should have led to Bengali political control of the Pakistani government. The West Pakistani establishment, led by military dictator Yahya Khan and civilian politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, refused to transfer power. On the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistan Army launched Operation Searchlight, a systematic military assault on the Bengali civilian population of East Pakistan. The genocide that followed, in which estimates of the dead range from several hundred thousand to three million people, and which saw the rape of hundreds of thousands of women and the mass displacement of millions more, is the foundational trauma of Bangladesh's security identity.

3.3 Liberation War and the Birth of National Defense

The Liberation War of 1971 was more than a military conflict; it was the birth of a nation and the crucible in which Bangladesh's security identity was formed. The Mukti Bahini, the armed forces of the liberation struggle, were a remarkable combination of defecting East Pakistani military and paramilitary personnel, student activists, political organizers, and ordinary civilians who took up arms to resist genocidal violence. Their struggle, supported materially and ultimately militarily by India, established several principles that would define Bangladesh's subsequent defense culture.

First, the Liberation War established the principle that the armed forces exist to serve the people, not to rule them. The Mukti Bahini were deeply integrated with the civilian population in ways that conventional military forces are not. Their legitimacy derived from popular support, not from the authority of a state. This history creates a normative expectation that Bangladesh's armed forces should maintain a relationship of service and accountability to the civilian population, an expectation that has been repeatedly violated by military interventions in politics but never entirely suppressed.

Second, the Liberation War demonstrated both the power and the limits of irregular warfare. The Mukti Bahini, without heavy weapons, without an air force, and without naval capacity, were able to impose significant costs on a conventionally superior Pakistani military through guerrilla tactics, popular support, and an intimate knowledge of the terrain. But they could not defeat the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Pakistan Army alone. Final victory required the intervention of the Indian military, which launched a full-scale conventional offensive in December 1971 and brought the war to a rapid conclusion with Pakistan's surrender on December 16, 1971. This experience taught that irregular resistance is necessary but not sufficient; conventional military capability is ultimately indispensable.

Third, the Liberation War left Bangladesh deeply indebted to India for its liberation, but also deeply aware of the asymmetric implications of that debt. India's intervention was not entirely altruistic: it served Indian strategic interests by breaking Pakistan, its principal rival. This dual character of Indian support, simultaneously fraternal and self-interested, has shaped Bangladesh-India relations ever since, generating a complex mixture of gratitude, resentment, dependence, and the desire for independence that still characterizes the bilateral relationship.

3.4 The Post-Liberation Crisis: Coups, Instability, and the Militarization of Politics

Bangladesh's post-liberation history is marked by a devastating pattern of political instability, military coups, and the repeated failure of democratic governance. This history is directly relevant to defense policy because it reveals the way in which internal political dynamics have distorted the development of Bangladesh's security institutions and prevented the formation of a coherent, long-term strategic vision.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father and first Prime Minister, was assassinated in August 1975 in a military coup led by a group of junior army officers. The coup was followed by a period of extreme political instability in which counter-coups, mutinies, and political murders became routine features of Bangladeshi political life. By November 1975, Major General Ziaur Rahman, one of the heroes of the Liberation War, had consolidated power, and Bangladesh entered a prolonged period of military-dominated politics that would not fully end until the restoration of democracy in 1991.

Ziaur Rahman, who ruled Bangladesh from 1975 until his own assassination in 1981, was in many ways a contradictory figure in terms of defense policy. On one hand, he recognized the importance of building Bangladesh's military capacity and began the process of diversifying arms suppliers away from dependence on any single patron. On the other hand, his government was characterized by the same internal political violence, executions of perceived military rivals, and institutionalized repression that undermined the rule of law and civilian oversight of the military.

Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who seized power in 1982 and ruled until 1990, continued and extended the pattern of military-dominated governance. Ershad's years in power were characterized by systematic corruption in defense procurement, political manipulation of the military, and the use of security services as instruments of political control. The institutional damage inflicted on Bangladesh's armed forces during these years of politicized military rule has been profound and lasting.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991 represented a structural shift in civil-military relations, though it did not immediately resolve the deep tensions between civilian and military authority. The two major parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, both cultivated relationships with sympathetic military officers and used security services as instruments of political competition. The caretaker government system, introduced in 1996 to ensure neutral electoral administration, temporarily gave the military enhanced institutional influence, which it exercised in troubling ways.

The most recent military intervention in democratic politics occurred in 2007-2008, when a military-backed caretaker government suspended normal political activity, arrested political leaders including both Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, and attempted to restructure the political system. This intervention ultimately failed to achieve its stated aims of reducing corruption and depoliticizing governance, and it left a legacy of deepened mutual suspicion between political parties and the military establishment.

The July Revolution of 2024, which removed Sheikh Hasina from power through a mass popular uprising rather than a military coup, represented a different kind of political transition. The toppling of Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a popular mass uprising has changed the strategic, political, and social dynamics of South Asia's second-largest economy. The Diplomat The military's role in this transition, standing aside rather than actively suppressing the uprising, suggests a possible evolution in civil-military relations, though the structural tensions that have historically characterized this relationship remain.

3.5 Forces Goal 2030: The First Formal Defense Planning Framework

One of the most significant developments in Bangladesh's defense policy history was the introduction of the Forces Goal 2030 framework in 2009 under the Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina. Forces Goal 2030 is a military modernization program in Bangladesh that commenced in 2009 and was updated in 2017, and later updated after the July Revolution. It is designed to enhance the capabilities of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, including the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, as well as the Coast Guard and Border Guard Bangladesh under a separate program. Wikipedia

The significance of Forces Goal 2030 extends beyond its specific procurement objectives. It represents Bangladesh's first systematic attempt to develop a comprehensive, multi-service defense planning framework, something that most mature democracies take for granted but that Bangladesh had conspicuously lacked throughout its history. The framework's introduction was itself a sign of institutional maturation, an acknowledgment that defense planning requires long-term horizons and systematic methodology rather than ad hoc responses to immediate crises.

The requirement for modernisation was realised in the aftermath of the 2008 Bangladesh-Myanmar naval standoff, which resulted in Bangladesh's favor. Wikipedia This event is instructive: it was a specific security incident, rather than abstract strategic calculation, that created the political will for systematic defense planning. This pattern, in which crises catalyze reform that abstract planning arguments cannot, is common in security policy across many states and should inform how Bangladesh designs its future policy processes.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The 2008 naval standoff with Myanmar arose from competing claims to maritime zones in the Bay of Bengal, an area of considerable economic and strategic significance given the hydrocarbon resources believed to lie beneath its waters. Bangladesh's successful assertion of its maritime rights, ultimately vindicated by international arbitration, provided a powerful demonstration that legal tools and diplomatic skill could substitute for military force in protecting strategic interests, at least under specific conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT - UNDERSTANDING BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION

4.1 Geography as Destiny: Bangladesh's Strategic Location

Bangladesh occupies one of the most geopolitically consequential positions in South Asia. It is almost entirely surrounded by India on three sides, with a relatively short border with Myanmar to the southeast and an opening to the Bay of Bengal to the south. This geographic situation has been described, somewhat melodramatically, as "India-locked" but it is more accurately described as deeply embedded in the South Asian security complex in ways that Bangladesh cannot escape regardless of the policies it adopts.

The Bay of Bengal coastline of approximately 580 kilometers, combined with the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of some 118,813 square kilometers confirmed by international arbitration, transforms Bangladesh from a purely continental power into a maritime one as well. The Bay of Bengal is rapidly becoming one of the most strategically significant water bodies in the Indo-Pacific region, as it constitutes the main maritime approach to the northeastern quadrant of the Indian Ocean, provides access to the Malacca Strait and hence to the South China Sea, and overlies significant hydrocarbon resources.

Bangladesh's geographic position relative to China's strategic ambitions is also important. China has invested heavily in developing connectivity infrastructure through the Bay of Bengal as part of its Belt and Road Initiative and its broader effort to secure alternative access routes to the Indian Ocean that bypass potentially hostile chokepoints like the Malacca Strait. Bangladesh's deep-sea port project at Matarbari and other infrastructure investments in the southeastern part of the country are directly connected to this broader Chinese strategic geography.

The northeastern India connectivity issue is equally significant. India's seven northeastern states, the so-called "Chicken's Neck" territory connected to the rest of India by a narrow strip of land through the Siliguri Corridor, are geographically isolated and economically underdeveloped. Bangladesh provides a much more efficient transit route for connecting the northeastern states to the rest of India and to global markets. This transit relationship gives Bangladesh genuine economic leverage with India, an asymmetry in Bangladesh's favor that is unusual given the overwhelming military asymmetry in India's favor.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

4.2 The India Relationship: Asymmetric Partnership and Structural Tensions

Bangladesh's relationship with India is the most complex and consequential in its foreign policy portfolio. The two countries share not only a nearly 4,156-kilometer border, the longest such border India shares with any neighbor, but also language (Bengali is spoken natively in the Indian state of West Bengal), culture, history, and the profound shared experience of the Liberation War.

Yet the relationship is deeply asymmetric. India is the world's fifth largest economy and is rapidly developing into a great power. It has one of the world's largest armed forces, nuclear weapons, a sophisticated military-industrial complex, and the capacity to project significant military power across the entire South Asian region and beyond. Bangladesh is a lower-middle-income country with a GDP roughly one-twentieth of India's, a military that is modernizing but still relatively small, and no weapons of mass destruction.

This asymmetry generates a structural dynamic in which Bangladesh must constantly manage the risk of being subordinated to Indian preferences while simultaneously depending on India for trade, transit, and the basic condition of physical security on its western, northern, and eastern borders. The Farakka Barrage dispute over water-sharing from the Ganges River, the Teesta water issue that remains unresolved despite years of negotiation, the periodic flooding exacerbated by water management decisions made upstream in India, the border killings by the Indian Border Security Force, and the economic leverage India exercises through trade relationships all create points of friction in a relationship that is simultaneously indispensable and uncomfortable.

The post-2024 deterioration in Bangladesh-India relations following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina adds a new and particularly sensitive dimension to this already complex relationship. Counter-terrorism formed the bedrock of modern India-Bangladesh defence cooperation, culminating in Exercise Sampriti. New Delhi proposed a comprehensive defence partnership agreement in 2017, but the lingering mistrust restricted it to the signing of five memoranda of understanding on defence cooperation. It was only in 2024 that the defence partnership regained momentum due to Dhaka's increasing dissatisfaction with Chinese weaponry. ORF Online

The collapse of this momentum following the regime change has created a period of strategic uncertainty in the bilateral relationship. For Bangladesh's defense policy, this means that the comfort of assuming Indian acquiescence to Bangladeshi military modernization cannot be taken for granted, while at the same time outright hostile Indian responses to Bangladeshi strategic diversification must be carefully managed.

4.3 China: Arms Partner, Development Financier, and Strategic Complication

China's role in Bangladesh's defense policy is of a different character from India's. China does not share a border with Bangladesh, has no claim on Bangladeshi territory, and has historically maintained relatively non-interventionist relations with Dhaka. At the same time, China has become Bangladesh's primary arms supplier and a major infrastructure investor, which gives it significant economic and strategic influence.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Turkey and China have been Bangladesh's major suppliers of critical systems. Both countries have also opened new areas of strategic cooperation, like joint military drills and annual defense dialogues, with Bangladesh. Both Turkiye and China promote technology transfers to help develop Bangladesh's defense industry. The Diplomat This pattern of arms supply combined with technology transfer is part of China's broader strategy of using defense cooperation to build long-term economic and political relationships with partner states.

The acquisition of Chinese Ming-class submarines has been the most strategically significant of Bangladesh's recent defense purchases. The acquisition of Ming-class submarines from China has added strategic deterrence and undersea surveillance capabilities critical to securing maritime routes. These submarines are equipped with advanced detection systems and torpedoes, ensuring tactical superiority in the Bay of Bengal. Army Recognition

From China's perspective, Bangladesh's geographic position makes it strategically valuable as a potential access point to the Bay of Bengal and as a counterbalance to Indian regional dominance. Deepening defense relationships with Bangladesh serves Chinese interests by creating a degree of strategic dependency and by complicating India's ability to treat the Bay of Bengal as an Indian lake.

From Bangladesh's perspective, the Chinese relationship provides arms and development finance that would be unavailable or far more conditional from Western suppliers, and it provides a degree of strategic insurance against Indian pressure. But it also creates its own dependencies and strategic vulnerabilities, including the risk of becoming caught in the India-China competition in ways that could be extremely damaging to Bangladesh's interests.

A prudent step for Dhaka will be to strike a balance between both strategic partners and avoid overdependency on any single supplier. This policy will also align with Dhaka's foreign policy of geopolitical balancing, neutrality, and peaceful coexistence. The Diplomat

4.4 Myanmar: The Neighbor in Crisis

Bangladesh's southeastern neighbor, Myanmar, presents a defense challenge of a fundamentally different character from the challenges posed by India and China. Myanmar is not a great power competitor seeking to constrain Bangladesh's strategic options; it is a state in the grip of profound internal crisis whose consequences are being exported across Bangladesh's border whether Dhaka wishes it or not.

The February 2021 military coup that brought the Tatmadaw, Myanmar's armed forces, back to direct power following a decade of quasi-civilian governance has shattered Myanmar's fragile political order. The civil war between the junta and a coalition of resistance forces, including numerous ethnic armed organizations and the People's Defence Force established by the civilian National Unity Government, has intensified dramatically since late 2023 when coordinated offensives by ethnic armed organizations began capturing major urban centers in several border regions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Arakan Army, particularly, has committed violence against Bangladeshis near the Naf River. The risk of the conflict spilling across the border is high, as there are sympathisers of the rebel forces. This has sparked increased incursions of Rohingyas into the country, along with Myanmar security personnel seeking to avoid capture. ORF Online

For Bangladesh, the Myanmar crisis creates several distinct security challenges. First, it generates continuing mass displacement of Rohingya Muslims from Rakhine State, adding to the approximately one million Rohingya refugees already in Bangladesh following the 2017 ethnic cleansing campaign. The refugee camps in Cox's Bazar are not merely a humanitarian problem; they are a security problem, as they provide operating environments for criminal networks, extremist organizations, and the circulation of weapons that destabilize the broader southeastern region of Bangladesh.

Second, the military conflict in Myanmar's border regions generates the risk of direct military incidents involving Bangladesh. Myanmar security forces have launched aerial strikes that have violated Bangladeshi airspace, and armed factions fighting on both sides of the conflict have crossed the border. The challenge for Bangladesh is to maintain security along a border with a state that is effectively ungoverned in its border regions, without becoming entangled in Myanmar's internal conflict.

Third, the rise of the Arakan Army, which controls much of the Rakhine State territory adjacent to Bangladesh's border, creates a new and uncertain actor in Bangladesh's security environment. The Arakan Army is not a government with recognized legal personality, but it exercises de facto governmental authority over significant territory and is unlikely to disappear regardless of the eventual outcome of Myanmar's civil war. Bangladesh must develop some kind of working relationship with this entity without legitimizing it diplomatically in ways that complicate relations with the eventual government of Myanmar.

4.5 The Bay of Bengal: Contested Maritime Space and Strategic Opportunity

The Bay of Bengal has emerged in the twenty-first century as one of the world's most strategically important maritime spaces. This reflects the convergence of several developments: the growth of Indian and Chinese naval power, the identification of significant hydrocarbon resources in the Bay's waters, the development of major ports and maritime infrastructure by multiple states competing for regional influence, and the Bay's centrality to the major trade routes connecting East Asia with South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond.

Bangladesh's 2012 maritime boundary delimitation award against Myanmar, and the 2014 award against India, both issued by international arbitral tribunals, resolved most of the immediate territorial disputes over Bangladesh's maritime zone. Bangladesh's 2012 and 2014 International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea rulings affirming maritime boundaries against Myanmar and India have further incentivized naval upgrades, including the acquisition of submarines and advanced surface combatants. Grokipedia

These rulings gave Bangladesh sovereign jurisdiction over a vast maritime zone rich in potential resources and strategically significant for its position relative to the main shipping lanes of the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bay of Bengal. They also created a responsibility: Bangladesh now has a maritime zone that it must have the capacity to police, protect, and develop. This is a significant driver of the naval dimension of Forces Goal 2030.

The competition for influence in the Bay of Bengal involves not only the regional states but also external powers, most importantly the United States, which has been engaged in a systematic effort to strengthen its relationships with Bay of Bengal littoral states as part of its broader Indo-Pacific strategy. In August 2025, the US and Bangladesh concluded a bilateral military exercise, Tiger Shark, which enhanced regional security cooperation, interoperability, and built mutual capacity between the armed forces of both nations. ORF Online

---

CHAPTER FIVE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEFENSE

5.1 Constitutional Foundations: What the Basic Law Says About Defense

The Constitution of Bangladesh, adopted on November 4, 1972 and subsequently amended sixteen times, provides the fundamental legal framework within which all defense policy must operate. Understanding this framework is essential not only for legal compliance but for grasping the normative foundations that legitimate defense policy in a democratic state.

The Preamble of the Constitution establishes the basic values of the republic: nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism, together with the rule of law, fundamental human rights, equality, and justice. These foundational principles create the normative environment within which defense policy operates. A defense policy that systematically violates fundamental rights, that undermines democratic governance, or that serves the interests of a narrow elite rather than the general population cannot be constitutional regardless of its military effectiveness.

Article 25 of the Constitution mandates that the State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter. The State shall strive for the renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for general and complete disarmament. Unhcr

This provision is of profound importance for defense policy. It establishes that Bangladesh's constitutional commitment is explicitly to peaceful dispute resolution and disarmament as ultimate goals, not to military power for its own sake. Defense capability is constitutionally justified as a means to an end, the protection of peace and sovereignty, not as an end in itself. This normative framework has implications for how defense policy should be framed, justified, and subjected to democratic accountability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The constitutional provisions on the executive branch establish that defense is primarily a matter of executive authority. The Prime Minister, as head of government, bears primary responsibility for national security, exercised through the Cabinet and the relevant ministries. The President, as ceremonial head of state, is the Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces (Article 61), but this is a formal rather than operational designation in normal circumstances. The Ministry of Defence, the Armed Forces Division under the Prime Minister's Office, and the individual service headquarters constitute the institutional architecture through which executive authority over defense is exercised.

Parliament's role in defense is formally significant but practically limited. Parliament has the authority to authorize defense expenditure through the annual budget process, to legislate on defense-related matters, and through its committees to scrutinize defense administration. However, the sensitivity and classification of much defense-related information, combined with the traditionally deferential posture of parliamentary scrutiny toward the military in Bangladesh, has meant that parliamentary oversight of defense has been considerably weaker in practice than in constitutional theory.

5.2 The Special Powers Act and Security Legislation

The legal framework for internal security in Bangladesh consists of a complex and at times contradictory body of legislation that has evolved since colonial times, accumulating provisions and ambiguities that create significant rule of law challenges.

National security laws in Bangladesh are found in: Articles 33, 141A, 141B, and 141C of the Constitution; Special laws such as the Special Powers Act of 1974 and the Special Security Forces Act of 1986; and the ordinary criminal laws such as section 505A of the Penal Code of 1860 and section 99A of the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898. The Daily Star

The Special Powers Act of 1974 (SPA) is the most significant and most controversial of Bangladesh's security laws. The SPA was enacted to take special measures for the prevention of prejudicial activities. It defines a "prejudicial act" as any act which is intended or likely to prejudice the sovereignty or defence of Bangladesh, prejudice the maintenance of friendly relations with Bangladesh, prejudice the security of Bangladesh or endanger public safety or the maintenance of public order, or create or incite feelings of enmity or hatred between different communities. The Daily Star

The SPA authorizes preventive detention without trial, which is among the most significant intrusions on civil liberties in Bangladesh's legal system. The use and abuse of the SPA in the name of protecting security interests has resulted in a steady pattern of human rights violations. The Daily Star The Act has been used not primarily against genuine security threats but against political opponents, journalists, and civil society activists, demonstrating the perennial risk that security legislation will be weaponized for political purposes.

This pattern of legislative abuse is not unique to Bangladesh; it is a common feature of security legislation in states with weak rule of law institutions. But it has specific and damaging implications for Bangladesh. It undermines public trust in the legitimacy of security institutions,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

it creates a chilling effect on the political debate and journalism that are essential to a functioning democracy, and it diverts security resources from genuine threats to political management. A future defense policy that takes seriously the democratic foundations of Bangladesh's constitution must address the reform or repeal of the SPA as an integral component of the broader security architecture.

5.3 The Army Act, Navy Act, and Air Force Act

The internal governance of Bangladesh's armed forces is regulated primarily by service-specific legislation: the Army Act of 1952 (originally a Pakistani law, substantially unchanged in Bangladesh), the Navy Ordinance of 1961, and the Air Force Act of 1953. These laws define the conditions of military service, the scope of military discipline, and the functioning of military courts and tribunals.

These laws are notable for their colonial vintage and their very limited adaptation to democratic governance principles. They vest extraordinary disciplinary powers in the military chain of command, including the authority to try service personnel before military courts for a wide range of offenses, and they provide very limited mechanisms for civilian review of military disciplinary proceedings.

The gap between the democratic principles of the Constitution and the authoritarian structure of military governance embedded in these colonial-era laws is a persistent source of tension in Bangladesh's civil-military relations. A comprehensive defense policy reform must grapple with this gap: how to maintain the military discipline necessary for effective combat capability while ensuring that service members retain appropriate constitutional rights and that military disciplinary proceedings meet basic rule of law standards.

5.4 International Law and Its Interface with Defense Policy

Bangladesh is a party to most of the major international legal instruments relevant to defense and security. These include the United Nations Charter, the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

These treaty obligations create a complex web of legal constraints on Bangladesh's defense policy. The UN Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state (Article 2(4)), with exceptions only for self-defense (Article 51) and UN-authorized collective security measures (Chapter VII). Bangladesh's constitutional commitment to peaceful international relations mirrors this charter framework.

The laws of armed conflict, embodied primarily in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, impose detailed requirements on how Bangladesh's armed forces must conduct military operations, including the obligation to distinguish between combatants and civilians, the prohibition of torture, and the duties of states toward prisoners of war. These obligations apply not only to hypothetical future conflicts but to Bangladesh's participation in UN peacekeeping

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

operations, which is one of the most significant dimensions of Bangladesh's defense engagement with the international community.

Bangladesh is the world's largest contributor of military personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations, having deployed more than 170,000 troops across sixty missions since its first deployment in 1988. This extraordinary commitment to international peacekeeping has multiple dimensions: it provides valuable operational experience for Bangladesh's armed forces, generates significant income in the form of UN reimbursements, enhances Bangladesh's international reputation and diplomatic influence, and reinforces the normative commitment to peaceful conflict resolution embedded in Article 25 of the Constitution. It also creates legal obligations, as peacekeeping personnel operate under UN mandate and are bound by the rules of engagement established by the Security Council and interpreted by the UN Secretariat.

CHAPTER SIX: JURISPRUDENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF DEFENSE POLICY

6.1 Natural Law and Its Defense Applications

The jurisprudential tradition of natural law holds that there exists a body of moral principles, discoverable by human reason, that bind all human beings regardless of positive law. In the context of defense, natural law provides the oldest and most durable justification for the right of self-defense: that no political community can be morally required to submit passively to destruction, and that the use of force to defend legitimate political authority against aggression is inherently justified.

This natural law foundation for self-defense is directly reflected in modern international law. The UN Charter's Article 51 recognizes the "inherent right" of individual or collective self-defense, using language that implies a pre-positive-law moral foundation rather than merely a treaty-based right. The word "inherent" is understood by most international lawyers to reference something akin to the natural law tradition: a right that exists independently of and prior to any international agreement.

For Bangladesh's defense policy, the natural law tradition provides a moral foundation that transcends the specific provisions of positive law. When positive law is inadequate, unjust, or inapplicable to novel situations, natural law reasoning can provide guidance for policy choices. The obligation to protect the lives and security of Bangladeshi citizens is not merely a constitutional requirement; it is a moral imperative grounded in the inherent dignity of human beings that Bangladesh's constitutional culture, drawing on both universal human rights norms and Islamic ethical tradition, affirms.

6.2 Legal Positivism and the Rule of Law in Defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Legal positivism, the tradition associated with Jeremy Bentham, John Austin, and H.L.A. Hart, holds that law is simply the command of the sovereign backed by the threat of sanction, and that the validity of law is a function of its proper enactment by recognized authority rather than its moral content. For defense policy, the positivist tradition emphasizes the importance of clear, enacted rules governing the authorization, conduct, and accountability of military operations.

The rule of law in defense contexts means several specific things. It means that the decision to use military force must be authorized by legally recognized authority, whether the constitutional executive, parliament, or the UN Security Council. It means that military operations must be conducted in accordance with established legal rules, both domestic and international. It means that service personnel must be accountable for violations of these rules through functioning legal processes rather than political immunities. And it means that citizens have access to meaningful legal remedies for violations of their rights by security institutions.

Bangladesh's defense legal framework, as noted, reflects a colonial heritage that is more consistent with executive dominance than with rule of law as understood in mature democracies. The limited parliamentary scrutiny of defense, the broad preventive detention powers under the Special Powers Act, the limited civilian review of military discipline, and the classification of vast amounts of defense-related information all represent departures from robust rule of law principles that a future defense policy reform must address.

The concept of accountability in defense policy has several dimensions that are worth distinguishing. Legal accountability refers to formal legal mechanisms through which individuals and institutions can be held responsible for specific acts or decisions, whether in domestic courts, military tribunals, or international legal forums. Democratic accountability refers to the broader mechanisms through which the political representatives of the people exercise oversight over defense policy and hold the executive accountable for its implementation. Professional accountability refers to the internal mechanisms by which military institutions enforce their own standards of professional conduct and competence.

6.3 Critical Legal Studies and the Politics of Security Law

The Critical Legal Studies movement, which emerged in American law schools in the 1970s and gained significant international influence, offers a distinctive perspective on the relationship between law and politics that is highly relevant to the analysis of security legislation.

Critical legal scholars argue that law is not a neutral, objective system of rules but is deeply political in character, reflecting and reinforcing existing power relationships. Security law, in particular, tends to be drafted and interpreted in ways that serve the interests of those in power while marginalizing the interests of the powerless. The broad definitions of "security threat" that appear in legislation like Bangladesh's Special Powers Act, and the concentration of discretionary power in executive authorities with minimal judicial review, are from a critical legal perspective not merely inefficient but structurally unjust.

This critical perspective has important implications for how Bangladesh should approach the reform of its security legal framework. It suggests that the process of law reform matters as much

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

as its content: laws drafted in closed settings by executive officials without meaningful input from affected communities are likely to reproduce existing power imbalances even if their text appears neutral. A genuinely democratic and rights-protective security legal framework must emerge from an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process.

The feminist jurisprudential tradition adds another dimension to this analysis. It points out that security threats are gendered: women face distinctive security threats, including domestic violence, sexual violence in conflict situations, and the specific vulnerabilities created by displacement and poverty, that are systematically underrepresented in security frameworks focused on state-level military threats. Bangladesh's enormous success in women's participation in the economy and in some dimensions of public life has not been matched by a corresponding sensitivity to gendered security dimensions in defense and security policy.

6.4 Islamic Jurisprudence and Its Relevance to Defense

Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority state, and Islamic jurisprudence, fiqh, constitutes an important dimension of the normative environment within which defense policy operates, particularly for the majority of the population and within the religious discourse that shapes public attitudes toward military service, violence, and the state.

Islamic jurisprudential tradition has a rich and sophisticated body of thought on warfare, its justification, its conduct, and its limits. The concepts of jihad (literally "striving," but in the military context referring to defensive war), the distinction between dar al-Islam and dar al-harb (the domain of peace and the domain of war), the obligations of Muslims toward non-combatants, prisoners of war, and the natural environment during warfare, and the conditions under which political authority may legitimately command military service are all subjects of extensive jurisprudential elaboration in the classical fiqh tradition.

Modern Islamic scholars have substantially revised and refined these traditional frameworks in light of contemporary international law and human rights norms. The dominant contemporary Islamic jurisprudential view holds that the conditions for just war in Islamic tradition correspond closely to those of international law, including the requirements of defensive purpose, proportionality, discrimination between combatants and civilians, and authorization by legitimate authority. The concept of maslaha, the public interest, provides a flexible jurisprudential tool for Islamic jurists to adapt classical rules to contemporary circumstances.

The relevance of this tradition to Bangladesh's defense policy is not merely academic. In a society where religious authority shapes public discourse on political legitimacy, military service, and the use of force, defense policymakers who are insensitive to Islamic jurisprudential perspectives risk losing the religious communities' support for security institutions and policies. Conversely, engaging seriously and constructively with the Islamic jurisprudential tradition can provide a powerful domestic legitimation for a defense policy that is, in its essentials, consistent with both international law and Islamic ethics.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SEVEN: THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

7.1 Realism and Its Enduring Insights

International relations as an academic discipline has been organized, since its emergence in the early twentieth century, around a series of competing theoretical traditions that offer different explanations of state behavior and different prescriptions for foreign and defense policy. The oldest and arguably most durable of these traditions is realism, which holds that the international system is characterized by anarchy (the absence of a central authority capable of enforcing rules), that states are the primary actors, that states are primarily concerned with their own survival and security, and that the pursuit of power is the dominant dynamic of international politics.

Classical realism, associated with figures like E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, and Reinhold Niebuhr, grounds this analysis in a view of human nature as fundamentally self-interested, competitive, and prone to the abuse of power. Structural realism, or neorealism, associated with Kenneth Waltz and developed further by John Mearsheimer and others, locates the explanation for state behavior not in human nature but in the structure of the international system: because there is no world government to protect states from each other, rational states must ultimately rely on their own power for security.

Realism offers Bangladesh several important insights. It counsels against naive reliance on international institutions, treaty commitments, or the good intentions of powerful neighbors as substitutes for military capability. It emphasizes that in the final analysis, Bangladesh's security depends on Bangladesh's own capacity to defend itself and on the credibility of its deterrent posture. It warns against idealistic policies that ignore the power-political realities of the international system.

However, realism has significant limitations as a guide for Bangladesh's specific situation. Pure realist logic, which counsels maximizing power relative to others, is simply not available to a state of Bangladesh's size, population, and economic circumstances relative to its larger neighbors. Bangladesh cannot compete militarily with India or China on realist terms; the power asymmetry is too great. Realism can explain why Bangladesh seeks to balance major powers against each other and why it maintains military forces adequate for deterrence, but it cannot explain the specific policy choices that a small-to-medium power must make to navigate a world dominated by great powers.

7.2 Liberalism, Institutionalism, and the Democratic Peace

Liberal international relations theory offers a very different set of insights and prescriptions. Liberal theory emphasizes the pacifying effects of democratic governance, economic interdependence, and international institutions. The "democratic peace" hypothesis, the empirical

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

observation that established democracies very rarely go to war with each other, is one of the most robust findings in empirical international relations research.

The implications of liberal theory for Bangladesh are significant. They suggest that Bangladesh's domestic democratic development is not merely an end in itself but a security strategy: a Bangladesh that is robustly democratic is both less likely to be attacked by democratic states and more likely to attract the kind of international partnerships, economic relationships, and institutional support that provide security through means other than military force.

The democratic peace also has implications for Bangladesh's regional relationships. India, the world's largest democracy, has a strong empirical record of peaceful relations with other democracies. To the extent that Bangladesh strengthens its own democratic institutions, it creates conditions for a more stable and cooperative relationship with India that is not primarily dependent on military deterrence.

Liberal institutionalism adds the insight that international institutions, including the United Nations, SAARC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and other multilateral frameworks, can mitigate security competition by providing forums for communication, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and norms that constrain state behavior. Bangladesh's active participation in these institutions is not merely diplomatic theater; it is a concrete investment in the institutional infrastructure that makes the use of force more costly and peaceful resolution of disputes more feasible.

7.3 Constructivism and the Social Construction of Security

Constructivist theory in international relations, associated with scholars like Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, and Peter Katzenstein, argues that international politics is not simply determined by material factors like military power and economic size, but by ideas, norms, and identities that shape how states understand their interests and each other.

From a constructivist perspective, Bangladesh's security identity is not simply given by its geographic situation or its military capabilities. It is constructed through historical experience, political discourse, and international socialization. The founding narratives of Bangladesh, particularly the Liberation War of 1971, shape how Bangladeshis understand their national identity, what they see as legitimate and illegitimate uses of force, who they identify as friends and adversaries, and what foreign policy principles they regard as non-negotiable.

Constructivist analysis also draws attention to the role of international norms in shaping Bangladesh's defense policy. Bangladesh's extraordinary commitment to UN peacekeeping, its constitutional articulation of peaceful international relations, and its participation in various arms control regimes all reflect the internalization of international norms that shape policy choices in ways that pure power-political analysis would not predict.

Constructivism is particularly useful for understanding the ideational dimensions of Bangladesh's evolving security relationships. The shift in relations with India following the 2024 political transition is not merely a change in the material interests of the two states; it reflects a change in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

how political elites in both countries understand the relationship and each other. Repairing this relationship, if and when that becomes the shared objective, will require not only practical confidence-building measures but a reconstruction of the shared narrative about Bangladesh-India relations.

7.4 Post-Colonial Theory and the Specific Anxieties of the Former Colony

Post-colonial theory offers perspectives that are particularly relevant to states like Bangladesh that emerged from colonial subjugation with specific historical traumas, institutional inheritances, and patterns of relationship with more powerful states that reflect the asymmetries of the colonial period.

The post-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon argued that the violence of colonialism creates specific psychological and political pathologies in colonized peoples, including a complicated relationship with the formerly colonizing power that combines attraction and repulsion, mimicry and rejection. In the context of defense policy, this translates into a complicated relationship with the institutional legacies of colonial military organization and law, a heightened sensitivity to any perceived slight against sovereignty, and a powerful aspiration to genuine self-determination that can sometimes override sober strategic calculation.

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, the process by which Western powers have constructed distorted and self-serving images of Asian and Middle Eastern peoples that have served to legitimize domination, has an application to the way in which Bangladesh's security environment is framed by external analysts. Western and Indian assessments of Bangladesh's security situation often carry implicit assumptions about Bangladeshi capacity, rationality, and democratic legitimacy that reflect persistent power asymmetries. Bangladesh's own strategic community must develop the analytical capacity to interrogate these external framings and to generate genuinely independent assessments of its security interests.

Subaltern studies, the tradition of historiography associated with scholars like Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, recovers the voices and perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized in official historical accounts. Applied to defense policy, this tradition demands that the security concerns and perspectives of rural communities, indigenous peoples, women, and other marginalized groups be incorporated into security planning rather than treated as subordinate to the security concerns of the state elite.

7.5 Complex Interdependence and the Limits of Military Solutions

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's theory of complex interdependence, developed in the 1970s, argued that international relations in the contemporary world are characterized by multiple channels of interaction between states, including economic, social, and cultural connections as well as political and military ones; by the absence of a clear hierarchy among issues (with economic issues sometimes mattering more than military ones); and by the declining utility of military force as an instrument of policy among interdependent states.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's relationship with India illustrates the complex interdependence model in vivid ways. The two countries are bound together by trade relationships worth billions of dollars annually, by the movement of millions of people across their shared border, by shared rivers and environmental challenges, by cultural and linguistic connections, and by the presence of large Bengali-speaking communities on both sides of the border. In this context, the idea that military competition would be the dominant dynamic of the relationship, as pure realism would predict, understates the density of non-military connections that create mutual vulnerabilities and shared interests.

This does not mean that military factors are irrelevant to Bangladesh-India relations; they are not. But it does mean that defense policy cannot be formulated in isolation from economic policy, water policy, migration policy, and cultural policy. A comprehensive security framework must integrate all of these dimensions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: GLOBAL DIPLOMACY, FOREIGN POLICY, AND DEFENSE

8.1 The Concept of Strategic Balancing: Bangladesh's Preferred Posture

The concept of strategic balancing, or hedging, refers to the deliberate policy of a state to maintain productive relationships with competing major powers in order to avoid exclusive dependence on any single patron and to preserve maximum strategic flexibility. This is essentially the contemporary operationalization of the Non-Aligned Movement's founding principle: friendship with all, hostility toward none.

Bangladesh has pursued strategic balancing with considerable skill, given its constrained circumstances. It has maintained close relations with China, its principal arms supplier, while also cultivating relationships with the United States, Japan, European states, Turkey, and other partners. It has sought to avoid being forced to choose sides in the India-China competition, recognizing that such a forced choice would be catastrophic for a state that needs cooperative relations with both.

The specific instruments of strategic balancing available to Bangladesh include diversification of arms procurement, participation in multilateral diplomatic forums, contribution to UN peacekeeping, cultivation of bilateral relationships with middle powers that can provide alternative sources of support, and the strategic use of economic leverage such as the transit potential for India's northeastern states and the significance of Bangladeshi labor migration to various economies.

Since its regime change in 2024, Bangladesh has been charting new pathways in its foreign policy to break free of the former 15-year-old Awami League mould and craft a new identity. Diversifying defence partnerships has thus become a priority for the Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. ORF Online

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The strategic significance of Bangladesh's efforts to diversify its defense partnerships cannot be overstated. The Japanese offer consists of the Mogami-class stealth frigate and the Soryū-class submarine, which has air-independent propulsion capabilities. During Yunus's visit to Japan in May 2025, Tokyo also committed to providing five patrol boats to the Bangladesh Navy. ORF Online Japan's emergence as a defense partner represents a qualitatively new dimension in Bangladesh's strategic relationships, particularly given Japan's own evolving approach to defense cooperation under its revised security policy framework.

8.2 United Nations Peacekeeping: Defense Policy as Diplomacy

Bangladesh's extraordinarily active participation in UN peacekeeping operations occupies a unique position in its defense policy. No other aspect of Bangladesh's military engagement with the world is as significant, as widely recognized, or as multidimensional in its implications.

The scale of Bangladesh's peacekeeping commitment is staggering. Having deployed more than 170,000 military and police personnel to more than 60 UN missions across four decades, Bangladesh consistently ranks as the world's largest single contributor to UN peacekeeping. Current Bangladeshi deployments include significant contingents in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Lebanon, Mali, and other conflict zones.

This commitment serves multiple interlocking purposes. Operationally, it provides Bangladesh's armed forces with invaluable experience in complex, multinational military operations under challenging conditions. This experience cannot be replicated in training exercises; it requires actual operational deployment in environments with genuine dangers and unpredictable dynamics. The tactical, logistical, medical, and command-and-control lessons learned in peacekeeping deployments have contributed substantially to the professionalization of Bangladesh's military.

Economically, UN peacekeeping generates significant reimbursements that contribute to Bangladesh's defense budget and, more broadly, to the country's foreign exchange earnings. The financial return from peacekeeping has historically been an important consideration in the decision to maintain such a large deployment.

Diplomatically, peacekeeping participation gives Bangladesh a platform for international visibility and influence that its relative size and power would not otherwise command. A Bangladesh that is the world's largest peacekeeping contributor is listened to in the UN Security Council and in international security forums in ways that its raw material power would not justify. This diplomatic capital is a genuine strategic asset.

8.3 Bangladesh's Multilateral Frameworks: SAARC, BIMSTEC, and Regional Architecture

Bangladesh participates in several multilateral regional frameworks that are relevant to its defense and security interests. The most prominent are the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

SAARC, founded in 1985, has long been recognized as an underperforming multilateral organization, largely because of the India-Pakistan conflict that has prevented meaningful cooperation on core security issues and has effectively paralyzed much of the organization's agenda. Bangladesh has generally been a supportive SAARC member, seeing it as a platform for regional economic integration and for managing its relationship with India in a multilateral rather than purely bilateral context. But the structural limitations of SAARC, particularly the India-Pakistan veto dynamic, have prevented it from becoming the kind of regional security architecture that Southeast Asia's ASEAN has developed.

BIMSTEC, which connects Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan around the Bay of Bengal, has attracted increasing attention as a potentially more functional alternative regional framework, partly because it excludes Pakistan and therefore avoids the India-Pakistan paralysis. Its security cooperation dimensions, including counterterrorism, maritime security, and disaster management, are directly relevant to Bangladesh's security interests. BIMSTEC's effectiveness has, however, been limited by the same fundamental challenge that constrains most regional security cooperation: the reluctance of states to surrender sovereign autonomy in security matters to regional institutions.

CHAPTER NINE: POLITICAL THEORY, CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS, AND DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE

9.1 The Theory of Civil-Military Relations: Huntington, Janowitz, and Beyond

The relationship between civilian political authority and military institutions is one of the most fundamental questions in political theory and in the practical governance of democratic states. Samuel Huntington's foundational work, The Soldier and the State (1957), established the dominant framework for thinking about this relationship in the post-war period. Huntington argued for what he called "objective civilian control," in which the military is maintained as an autonomous professional institution with its own distinct values and culture, oriented toward military competence, but firmly subordinated to civilian political direction.

Huntington's framework was explicitly designed for the American Cold War context, in which the principal threat to civilian control came not from the military's desire to seize power but from civilians' tendency to over-politicize the military by demanding that it share their values and political commitments. In the American context of the 1950s, this framework had considerable merit. But in the context of post-colonial states with histories of military rule, including Bangladesh, it requires significant modification.

Morris Janowitz offered an alternative framework in The Professional Soldier (1960), which emphasized the importance of the military adapting its professional culture to the realities of its democratic political environment rather than insulating itself in a separate professional sphere. Janowitz's concept of the "constabulary force," a military oriented toward minimum force,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

international peacekeeping, and domestic security rather than total war-fighting, anticipates many of the contemporary challenges facing states like Bangladesh.

The application of civil-military relations theory to Bangladesh requires frank acknowledgment of the specific pathologies that Bangladesh's political history has produced. The repeated military interventions in politics, from the 1975 coup through the 1982 coup through the 2007 military-backed caretaker intervention, have created institutional memories and informal networks that do not simply disappear when formal democratic governance is restored. The "praetorian" tradition in which the military regards itself as the ultimate arbiter of legitimate governance and acts on this self-perception under specific political conditions remains a structural feature of Bangladesh's political landscape even in periods of elected civilian government.

A comprehensive defense policy reform must explicitly address the institutional, legal, and normative dimensions of civil-military relations. This means not only asserting civilian supremacy in formal terms, which the Constitution already does, but building the actual institutional capacities, parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms, judicial oversight tools, and military professional culture that make civilian control substantive rather than nominal.

9.2 The Problem of Corruption in Defense Procurement

Defense procurement is, across the world, among the sectors most vulnerable to corruption. The combination of large contracts, classified information, technical complexity that limits effective outside scrutiny, national security justifications for opacity, and the political sensitivity of defense relationships creates structural conditions highly favorable to corrupt practices.

Bangladesh's defense procurement system has not been immune to this global pattern. Procurement processes have been hampered by allegations of corruption in major deals, including those for air force equipment, which have led to scrutiny and slowdowns. The interim government's review of ongoing contracts, such as the cancellation of a $21 million deal with an Indian shipbuilder in 2025, exemplifies how regime changes have introduced further delays and shifted priorities away from prior commitments. Grokipedia

The challenge of corruption in defense is not merely an ethical or legal issue; it is a strategic one. Corruption in defense procurement means that Bangladesh may be paying more than necessary for less capable equipment than advertised, that procurement decisions may be driven by kickback opportunities rather than genuine military need, and that the information systems and weapons that are actually delivered may be less effective than their specifications suggest. All of these consequences directly undermine military effectiveness.

Anti-corruption reform in defense requires a multi-dimensional approach. Parliamentary scrutiny of defense procurement must be strengthened, even given the legitimate security reasons for maintaining some level of confidentiality. The Directorate General of Defence Purchase (DGDP), which manages all procurement under the Ministry of Defence, often partnering with foreign suppliers, Defencejournalbd must be subject to robust internal audit and external oversight mechanisms. The role of the Comptroller and Auditor General in defense procurement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

must be strengthened and its findings made available to parliament and, where consistent with genuine security requirements, to the public.

9.3 Democratic Accountability and Defense: International Comparisons

The challenge of maintaining meaningful democratic accountability over defense policy without compromising genuine security requirements is a universal one in democratic states. The solutions that different democracies have developed illuminate both the possibilities and the limits of democratic defense governance.

The United Kingdom's system is instructive for a Westminster-model parliamentary democracy like Bangladesh. The House of Commons Defence Committee provides sustained, bipartisan parliamentary scrutiny of defense policy, budget, and procurement. It regularly produces reports that are highly critical of government defense policy and that frequently prompt significant policy revisions. The committee draws on independent expert testimony and has the power to demand information from the government, subject to national security exemptions that are themselves subject to parliamentary challenge.

The German model offers a different set of institutional innovations. The Bundestag exercises substantial control over military deployments, requiring parliamentary authorization for any out-of-area military mission. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (Wehrbeauftragter), a position with roots in German military history, provides an independent ombudsperson mechanism for addressing individual soldiers' complaints about their treatment and for monitoring conditions within the armed forces.

India, Bangladesh's nearest major democracy, provides another reference point. India's Parliament has historically exercised relatively limited oversight of defense policy, with defense scrutiny committees less powerful and less well-resourced than their counterparts in comparable democracies. This is widely recognized as a weakness in India's democratic governance, and reforms have been ongoing. For Bangladesh, the Indian experience is a useful reminder that parliamentary form alone does not guarantee substantive democratic accountability.

The United States model, with its powerful congressional defense oversight through the Armed Services Committees, its Government Accountability Office, its Inspector General system, and its freedom of information architecture that creates space for investigative journalism on defense matters, represents perhaps the most developed system of democratic defense accountability in the world, though it has its own well-documented failures and pathologies.

CHAPTER TEN: DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING: THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND TECHNIQUE

10.1 The Nature and Purpose of Defense Policy Documents

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

A defense policy document is not merely a description of current military capabilities or a shopping list for future procurement. At its best, it is a comprehensive statement of a state's strategic vision, its understanding of its security environment, the principles that will govern its defense decisions, and the resource commitments it is prepared to make to implement those decisions. It provides the framework within which military doctrine, force structure, procurement decisions, and diplomatic strategy are integrated into a coherent whole.

The significance of formal defense policy documents has grown as defense policy has become more complex, more resource-intensive, and more subject to democratic scrutiny. When defense decisions were made by monarchs in consultation with their generals, formal written policy frameworks were unnecessary. In a modern democracy, where defense consumes a significant fraction of public resources and involves decisions of life and death, where parliamentary accountability is a constitutional requirement, and where multiple government agencies and international partners must coordinate their efforts, the formal articulation of defense policy is both practically and constitutionally important.

Different states produce defense policy documents of varying character. Some produce comprehensive National Security Strategies that integrate defense with foreign policy, economic policy, and domestic security. Others produce Defense White Papers or Strategic Reviews that focus more specifically on the military dimensions of security. Some produce detailed force structure plans and procurement programs, others focus on higher-level strategic principles and leave the operational details to classified annexes.

Bangladesh currently lacks a publicly available comprehensive defense policy document. The Forces Goal 2030 framework provides a military modernization plan, but it is not a full defense policy in the sense described above. One of the central arguments of this textbook is that Bangladesh requires a comprehensive, publicly articulated defense policy framework that integrates strategic vision, legal principles, resource commitments, diplomatic objectives, and accountability mechanisms.

10.2 The Drafting Process: Participants, Mechanisms, and Challenges

The process of drafting a defense policy document is as important as its content. A document produced in isolation by a small group of military officers or executive officials, without meaningful input from parliament, civil society, academic expertise, or affected communities, is unlikely to command the broad support necessary for effective implementation. It is also unlikely to reflect the full range of threats, interests, and values that a comprehensive security framework must address.

The most successful defense policy reviews in democratic states have followed a process that combines several elements. First, a comprehensive strategic assessment phase in which the intelligence community, diplomatic service, military planners, and independent experts contribute to a shared understanding of the threat environment. Second, a policy development phase in which options are developed and assessed against strategic criteria, resource constraints, and legal frameworks. Third, a consultation phase in which draft policy documents are reviewed by parliament, subjected to expert scrutiny, and in appropriate cases made available for public

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

comment. Fourth, a formalization phase in which the policy is given official status through appropriate executive and potentially legislative processes. Fifth, an implementation and review phase in which the policy is translated into operational guidance, monitored for effectiveness, and periodically reassessed.

The challenges in this process are significant. Classification requirements limit the information that can be shared in consultation phases. The sheer technical complexity of many defense issues limits the number of people capable of contributing meaningfully to the process. Bureaucratic and organizational interests shape the contributions of institutional participants in ways that may not serve the national interest. Political considerations influence both what is included in policy documents and how it is framed.

For Bangladesh specifically, the drafting challenge is complicated by the current political transition, the ongoing uncertainty about the country's constitutional arrangements, the deterioration of relations with India, the evolving situation in Myanmar, and the rapidly changing global strategic environment. These factors argue for a policy framework that is robust in its principles but flexible in its operational application.

10.3 Comparative Analysis of Defense Policy Drafting: Case Studies

Examining how other states have approached defense policy drafting provides valuable comparative perspective for Bangladesh. The following cases are selected for their relevance to Bangladesh's specific situation.

Vietnam provides a particularly instructive comparison. Like Bangladesh, Vietnam is a smaller state that must manage its security in an environment dominated by a much more powerful neighboring state, China. Vietnam's defense policy, embodied in its "Four Nos" principles (no military alliances, no foreign bases on Vietnamese soil, no alignment with one country against another, no use of force or threat of force), provides a succinct articulation of strategic neutrality that protects Vietnamese sovereignty without provoking unnecessary confrontation with China. Vietnam's simultaneous pursuit of deep economic integration with China and strategic diversification of its security partnerships with the United States, Japan, India, and others illustrates the practical application of strategic balancing.

South Korea offers a different but equally relevant comparison. South Korea faces an existential military threat from North Korea while managing a profoundly complex relationship with China, its largest trading partner. South Korea's defense policy frameworks, including its periodic Defense White Papers, are notable for their transparency, their systematic threat assessment, their integration of domestic defense industry development, and their explicit engagement with the dilemmas of alliance management. South Korea's Alliance Management Strategy, balancing the US alliance against the need to maintain a functional relationship with China, is directly analogous to Bangladesh's challenge of managing relationships with India, China, and the United States simultaneously.

Indonesia provides a third comparative case. As the world's largest Muslim-majority state and a significant middle power in Southeast Asia, Indonesia's defense policy challenges include

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

maritime security across a vast archipelagic territory, internal security challenges from separatist movements and extremist organizations, and the management of great power competition in its neighborhood. Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy doctrine, which emphasizes independent decision-making rather than alignment with any bloc, is closely parallel to Bangladesh's own strategic balancing posture. Indonesia's recent defense modernization efforts, including the procurement of Rafale fighters and the development of a domestic defense industry, provide procurement strategy lessons relevant to Bangladesh's own modernization.

10.4 Necessity-Based Drafting: Principles and Application

The concept of necessity-based drafting, which this textbook adopts as its primary methodological approach, holds that defense policy documents should be grounded in specific, articulated security needs rather than in abstract strategic aspirations or comparative prestige considerations. A necessity-based approach asks: what specific threats does Bangladesh face? What capabilities are required to address those threats? What resources are available? And how should available resources be allocated among competing security needs?

This approach has both principled and practical advantages. Principled, because it roots defense resource decisions in genuine security needs rather than in institutional self-interest, prestige competition, or corruption opportunities. Practical, because it provides a clear framework for making the difficult resource allocation decisions that any defense policy must make.

The specific necessities that Bangladesh's defense policy must address can be organized into several categories. First, territorial defense: protecting the physical territory of Bangladesh, including its land borders and its maritime zone, from external aggression or encroachment. Second, internal security: protecting the population of Bangladesh from non-state threats including terrorist organizations, criminal networks, and the spillover effects of neighboring conflicts. Third, disaster response: Bangladesh's geography makes it extraordinarily vulnerable to natural disasters, and the armed forces play an essential role in disaster preparedness and response that must be reflected in their training, equipment, and organizational design. Fourth, international commitments: Bangladesh's participation in UN peacekeeping and its treaty obligations under international law create specific capability requirements. Fifth, economic security: protecting the maritime trade routes, the EEZ resources, and the economic infrastructure upon which Bangladesh's development depends.

10.5 The Defense Policy Drafting Toolkit: Analytical Frameworks

Defense policy drafting draws on a range of specialized analytical frameworks that help organize the complex information environment and facilitate systematic thinking about security choices.

Threat assessment frameworks provide systematic methodologies for identifying, characterizing, and prioritizing security threats. A standard threat assessment considers the intent, capability, and opportunity of potential adversaries. Intent refers to whether an actor has objectives that conflict with Bangladesh's interests to a degree that might motivate military action. Capability refers to whether the actor possesses the military means to translate that intent into effective

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

action. Opportunity refers to whether the political, diplomatic, and operational circumstances would enable the actor to act on its intent and capability.

Capability assessment frameworks provide methodologies for evaluating the military capabilities required to address identified threats. These frameworks typically distinguish between operational capability requirements, what the military must be able to do, and enabling capabilities, the training, logistics, command and control, intelligence, and sustainment that allow operational capabilities to function effectively.

Resource allocation frameworks provide methodologies for translating capability requirements into resource commitments. These frameworks must engage with the fundamental tension between unlimited security needs and limited defense budgets. Methodologies including cost-effectiveness analysis, portfolio approaches to capability development, and prioritization frameworks based on risk assessment help to make these allocation decisions more systematic and defensible.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT OF 2024-2026

11.1 The Political Transition and Its Defense Implications

The July Revolution of 2024 and the installation of the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government created both opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh's defense policy. The transition offered an opportunity to break from policy patterns that had served political rather than strategic purposes, to reorient defense relationships that had become uncomfortably dependent on specific bilateral arrangements, and to begin the process of developing a more comprehensive and transparent defense policy framework.

At the same time, the transition created significant challenges. The departure of experienced political and bureaucratic leadership, the uncertainty about constitutional arrangements and the timeline for elections, the deterioration of relations with India, and the broader global economic pressures affecting Bangladesh's defense budget all complicated the defense policy environment.

The change in government in Bangladesh, marked by the appointment of an interim cabinet led by Muhammad Yunus, has reignited discussions about revisiting the Forces Goal 2030. This ambitious plan, introduced in 2009 under Sheikh Hasina's leadership and revised in 2017, was designed to transform the Bangladeshi Armed Forces into a modern and versatile military force. Army Recognition

The interim government's approach to defense has been characterized by a combination of continuity and diversification. The fundamental commitments of Forces Goal 2030 have been maintained, but there has been a clear effort to broaden the range of arms suppliers and defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

partners, reducing the very heavy dependence on Chinese equipment that characterized the Hasina years.

On 9 December 2025, the Bangladesh Air Force signed a Letter of Intent with Leonardo S.p.A of Italy to procure Eurofighter Typhoon Wikipedia, marking a historic shift toward Western defense technology that represents the most significant change in Bangladesh's arms procurement orientation in decades.

11.2 The Budget Reality: Resources and Constraints

Any honest assessment of Bangladesh's defense policy must grapple seriously with the budget reality. The 2025-26 defence budget is Tk 40,698 crore, mostly for operational expenses; modernization receives limited allocation. The majority, Tk 37,812 crore, is set for operational costs covering salaries, logistics, and day-to-day military activities, while development projects receive a modest Tk 916 crore. Defencejournalbd

This budget structure reflects a fundamental tension in Bangladesh's defense economics. The large and growing personnel establishment, the legacy equipment that requires expensive maintenance, and the basic operational costs of running three armed services absorb most of the defense budget, leaving limited resources for the modernization investments that Forces Goal 2030 requires. The ongoing devaluation of the Bangladeshi Taka, which reduces the dollar value of the defense budget at a time when most defense equipment must be purchased in dollars, further compounds this challenge.

Financial pressures intensified by inflation eroding real defense spending gains despite nominal budget increases of approximately 3.6% for fiscal year 2024-25. In the Bangladesh Air Force, a critical gap persists in replacing obsolete fighter aircraft, including MiG-29s and Chinese F-7s, which constitute the bulk of combat assets as of 2025. Grokipedia

The implications of this budget reality for defense policy drafting are significant. A defense policy that identifies legitimate security needs far in excess of available resources without addressing the resource gap is not a serious policy document; it is a wish list. A necessity-based defense policy must engage honestly with resource constraints and develop both a prioritization framework for allocating existing resources and a resource mobilization strategy for closing the gap between needs and available means.

The proposed $75 billion defence modernisation programme spanning 2026 to 2040 that has been discussed in defense circles represents an aspiration that dramatically exceeds current and foreseeable defense budget realities. This proposed modernisation programme marks a profound shift in Dhaka's military doctrine, force posture, and international partnerships. Structured across a tri-service transformation, the plan envisions an integrated military with advanced network-centric warfare capabilities, strategic deterrence assets, and indigenous defence industrial development. Bdmilitary Whether such a plan can be funded from Bangladesh's economic resources, even with the growth trajectory that Bangladesh has maintained in recent years, is a fundamental question that any serious policy analysis must address.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

11.3 The Indigenous Defense Industry: Potential and Limits

The development of a domestic defense industrial base (DIB) is one of the most strategically significant components of Bangladesh's Forces Goal 2030 and its successor frameworks. An indigenous defense industry reduces external dependence, creates technological and industrial capacity, generates employment, and ultimately enhances strategic autonomy in ways that imported equipment cannot.

These efforts are supported by the development of a national defense industry, including the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory and the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory, which produce light weapons, utility vehicles, and other equipment through technology transfer agreements. Army Recognition

The technology transfer dimension of Bangladesh's arms procurement relationships is directly connected to the indigenous defense industry strategy. Rather than simply purchasing equipment off the shelf, Bangladesh has consistently sought to include technology transfer components in major procurement deals, building domestic capacity to maintain, upgrade, and eventually produce defense equipment.

However, the ambitions of the indigenous defense industry must be tempered by honest assessment of current capabilities. Bangladesh's defense industrial base is currently capable of producing light weapons, ammunition, some military vehicles, and certain naval vessels, but is far from the level of technological sophistication required to produce advanced fighter aircraft, submarines, or complex electronic systems. The gap between current capability and the aspiration to produce cutting-edge military technology cannot be closed quickly; it requires sustained investment in education, research and development, and industrial infrastructure over decades rather than years.

The international experience of states that have successfully developed sophisticated defense industries, including South Korea, Turkey, Israel, and India, is instructive about both the possibilities and the requirements for such development. All of these cases involved sustained state commitment over multiple decades, significant investment in civilian technological and industrial capacity (because defense industries cannot develop in isolation from the broader industrial and technological ecosystem), and the strategic patience to accept high costs and limited initial capability while the indigenous industry developed.

CHAPTER TWELVE: TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE POLICY ARCHITECTURE

12.1 The Elements of a Comprehensive Defense Policy

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

A comprehensive defense policy for Bangladesh must integrate several distinct but interconnected elements. The absence of any of these elements creates vulnerabilities in the policy framework that will undermine its effectiveness.

The first element is a clear and honest strategic assessment of Bangladesh's security environment, including both current and foreseeable threats, the strengths and weaknesses of potential adversaries, the opportunities available through diplomacy and international partnerships, and the specific geographic and demographic factors that shape Bangladesh's strategic options. This assessment must be grounded in intelligence, informed by academic and policy expertise, and subjected to rigorous critical analysis that challenges comfortable assumptions.

The second element is a set of clear strategic principles that reflect Bangladesh's constitutional values, its international legal obligations, its historical experience, and its long-term interests. These principles should be stated publicly and should provide the normative framework within which operational decisions are made. They should include the primacy of peaceful dispute resolution, the commitment to democratic civilian control of the military, the principle of proportionality in the use of force, the commitment to international law and UN Charter principles, and the strategic principle of non-alignment adapted to the twenty-first century environment.

The third element is a force structure plan that translates the identified security needs into specific military capabilities, organized across the three services and the various para-military forces. This plan must balance the competing demands of territorial defense, maritime security, internal security, disaster response, and peacekeeping, allocating available resources among these competing requirements on the basis of a systematic assessment of threat priorities and capability gaps.

The fourth element is a procurement strategy that identifies the specific equipment and systems required to implement the force structure plan, establishes priorities, identifies potential suppliers, and structures acquisition processes in ways that maximize value for money while maintaining strategic autonomy and building domestic industrial capacity.

The fifth element is a diplomatic strategy that situates Bangladesh's defense policy in its broader foreign policy framework, articulating how defense relationships, arms control commitments, peacekeeping participation, and multilateral institutional engagement contribute to Bangladesh's security objectives.

The sixth element is a legal and institutional framework that defines the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in the defense policy system, from the President and Prime Minister to the armed services chiefs, from parliament to the defense ministry, from the judiciary to civil society, and that creates clear accountability mechanisms for all of these actors.

The seventh element is a resource plan that honestly engages with the gap between security requirements and available resources, articulates how existing resources will be prioritized, and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

identifies how additional resources might be mobilized through defense budget increases, international cooperation, or indigenous production.

12.2 The Role of Intelligence in Defense Policy

Effective defense policy requires effective intelligence. The quality of strategic decisions is fundamentally limited by the quality of the information upon which they are based, and intelligence, the systematic collection, processing, and analysis of information about security threats and the capabilities and intentions of potential adversaries, is the primary mechanism for generating that information.

Bangladesh's intelligence architecture includes the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), which is primarily a military intelligence organization; the National Security Intelligence (NSI), which is the principal civilian intelligence service; the Special Branch of the Bangladesh Police; and the recently established Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), which has combined law enforcement and intelligence functions but has also been associated with serious human rights violations including extrajudicial killings.

The reform of Bangladesh's intelligence architecture is both a defense policy and a human rights imperative. Intelligence services that operate outside legal accountability frameworks, that engage in extrajudicial violence, or that are used for political surveillance rather than genuine security purposes undermine both the effectiveness of intelligence as a national security tool and the constitutional rights of citizens. The post-2024 political transition has created an opportunity to undertake comprehensive intelligence reform, but such reform requires political will, institutional expertise, and sustained commitment that may be difficult to sustain in the transitional political environment.

12.3 Cyber Security as a Defense Domain

The emergence of cyberspace as a domain of military and strategic competition is one of the most significant developments in the contemporary security environment. State and non-state actors are conducting offensive cyber operations that target critical infrastructure, financial systems, military command and control networks, and political institutions of potential adversaries on a daily basis.

Bangladesh's cyber security posture is, by most assessments, underdeveloped relative to the scale of its exposure. The rapid digitization of Bangladesh's economy and government services has created new vulnerabilities without a commensurate development of defensive capabilities. Bangladesh's financial system, its garment industry infrastructure, its power grid, and its government communications systems are all potentially vulnerable to cyber attack in ways that could impose significant economic and security costs.

A comprehensive defense policy must integrate cyber security as a core domain rather than treating it as a technical specialty. This means developing offensive as well as defensive cyber capabilities, ensuring that military command and control systems are hardened against cyber

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

attack, establishing clear doctrinal frameworks for responding to cyber attacks, and contributing to international norm development around state behavior in cyberspace.

12.4 Space and Emerging Technologies

The militarization of space and the proliferation of advanced military technologies including artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons systems, and directed energy weapons represent additional dimensions of the evolving strategic environment that Bangladesh's defense policy must begin to address.

Bangladesh's launch of the Bangabandhu-1 satellite in 2018 marked its entry into the space economy, though at a modest level compared to the space capabilities of its neighbors. Space capabilities are increasingly important for military purposes including reconnaissance, communication, navigation, and targeting. The dependence of modern military operations on space-based assets creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities: states with space capabilities gain significant military advantages, but their space assets are themselves potential targets.

Artificial intelligence is beginning to transform military operations in ways that will fundamentally change the character of future conflicts. AI applications in intelligence analysis, logistics optimization, predictive maintenance, autonomous systems, and decision support are already being deployed by leading military powers, and the pace of AI military applications is accelerating rapidly. Bangladesh's defense policy must grapple with the implications of AI-enabled warfare both for its own capability development and for the strategic environment in which it operates.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONTROVERSIES IN BANGLADESH DEFENSE POLICY

13.1 The Civil-Military Relations Controversy

Perhaps the most persistent and consequential controversy in Bangladesh's defense policy is the question of civil-military relations: the appropriate boundary between civilian political authority and military institutional autonomy, and the recurring failure to maintain that boundary in ways consistent with democratic governance.

The Bangladesh military's multiple direct interventions in politics, and its more subtle but pervasive influence over political processes even in periods of formal civilian rule, constitute a structural challenge to democratic governance that cannot be resolved simply by asserting constitutional principles. The military's institutional interests, including budget levels, procurement decisions, service conditions, and legal status, give it powerful incentives to maintain political influence. Its organizational coherence, its monopoly on significant means of force, and its information advantages in a security environment where much information is classified give it practical leverage over civilian politicians that is difficult to counteract.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The controversy over the role of the military in the 2007-2008 caretaker period is particularly instructive. The military's exercise of effective political authority during this period, including the detention of political leaders and the attempt to restructure the political system, was widely criticized as unconstitutional, but it was also defended by some commentators as a necessary corrective to the corruption and political dysfunction of the preceding period. This defense reveals the dangerous logic that has historically legitimized military interventions: the military as the last resort guardian of the national interest against the depredations of civilian politicians.

The post-2024 period offers an opportunity to reset this dynamic, but it also carries risks. The military's decision not to suppress the July 2024 uprising was crucial to its success; without the military's effective neutrality, the revolution would likely have failed. This creates a complex institutional dynamic in which the military is simultaneously an institution that must be subject to civilian control and an actor whose choices were decisive for the democratic transition. Managing this complexity requires sophisticated political skill and institutional design.

13.2 The China Dependency Controversy

Bangladesh's heavy dependence on China for defense equipment has been a persistent controversy, particularly given the India-China strategic competition and the implications of Chinese arms supply for Bangladesh's relationships with India and the United States.

The procurement of Chinese submarines is the most symbolically and strategically charged element of this dependency. The acquisition of Ming-class submarines from China has added strategic deterrence and undersea surveillance capabilities, including the BNS Pekua submarine base at Pekua in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh's first full-fledged facility for submarine operations, inaugurated on March 20, 2023, at a cost of $1.21 billion with assistance from China, capable of accommodating up to six submarines simultaneously. Wikipedia

Critics of the Chinese arms relationship argue that it gives Beijing undue strategic leverage over Dhaka, that Chinese equipment is of inferior quality to Western alternatives and is often supplied without genuine technology transfer despite contractual provisions, and that the relationship complicates Bangladesh's ability to maintain balanced relations with India and the United States. Supporters argue that China offers equipment and financing on terms that Western suppliers cannot or will not match, that technology transfer provisions, whatever their limitations in practice, provide a foundation for indigenous capability, and that the alternative, a defense posture entirely dependent on Indian goodwill, would be far more problematic for Bangladesh's strategic autonomy.

The post-2024 efforts to diversify defense procurement away from China, including the Eurofighter letter of intent, the Japanese defense cooperation, the Turkish air defense system, and the engagement with the United States, reflect the current government's judgment that the China dependency has become excessive. What makes this particularly complex for India is that the supplier is Turkey, not China. New Delhi has a well-rehearsed playbook for managing and countering Chinese inroads in its neighborhood. But a NATO member selling advanced technology to Bangladesh is a novel situation. Asia Times

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

13.3 The Rohingya Security Challenge: Humanitarian Crisis Meets Defense Policy

The presence of approximately one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district is both the most acute humanitarian crisis Bangladesh faces and a major defense and security challenge. The concentration of a large, stateless, impoverished, and traumatized population in a geographically limited area has created conditions in which criminal networks, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, and extremist recruitment have all flourished.

The defense policy dimensions of the Rohingya crisis are multiple. The military and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) are heavily involved in managing the border with Myanmar and in maintaining order in and around the refugee camps. The camps have become arms markets through which weapons originating in Myanmar's civil war circulate throughout the region. Several armed groups have established bases or recruitment operations in or around the camps, complicating Bangladesh's security environment and creating risks of violent incidents that could escalate into broader confrontations.

The diplomatic and legal dimensions of the Rohingya crisis are equally complex. Bangladesh has consistently argued, correctly under international law, that the Rohingya are Myanmar nationals with a legal right to return to Myanmar. It has sought international support for pressure on Myanmar, including support for accountability processes at the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. But progress on repatriation has been essentially nonexistent, and the prospect of a million or more Rohingya remaining in Bangladesh indefinitely is increasingly the practical planning assumption.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: DRAFTING THE FUTURE - FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR A BANGLADESH DEFENSE POLICY

14.1 The First Draft Framework: Principles-Based Approach

What follows is a first draft framework for Bangladesh's defense policy, organized around core principles and structured to address the primary security challenges identified in the preceding analysis. This draft is explicitly preliminary; it is intended to stimulate debate and to illustrate the methodology of necessity-based drafting rather than to provide a final, authoritative policy statement.

PRINCIPLE ONE: THE PRIMACY OF CONSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY

Bangladesh's defense policy must operate strictly within the framework of the Constitution and international law. All uses of force, whether in external defense, internal security operations, or peacekeeping missions, must be authorized by the appropriate constitutional authority, conducted

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

in accordance with the laws of armed conflict, and subject to effective legal accountability. The armed forces serve the constitutional order and the people it represents, not any political party, faction, or individual. Any use of military force for political purposes, including political intimidation, electoral manipulation, or the suppression of legitimate political dissent, is unconstitutional and inconsistent with Bangladesh's defense policy.

PRINCIPLE TWO: STRATEGIC NON-ALIGNMENT AND ACTIVE DIPLOMACY

Bangladesh will maintain its historic policy of non-alignment, understood in the twenty-first century context as the deliberate cultivation of constructive relationships with multiple competing powers to maximize Bangladesh's diplomatic flexibility and strategic autonomy. Bangladesh will not join any military alliance that would commit it to use force in conflicts not directly related to its own security interests. Bangladesh will actively use diplomacy, multilateral engagement, confidence-building measures, and peaceful dispute resolution mechanisms to reduce threats before they require military responses.

PRINCIPLE THREE: MINIMUM NECESSARY FORCE AND MAXIMUM DETERRENCE

Bangladesh will maintain military forces sufficient to deter external aggression and to protect its territorial integrity and maritime zones, but will not pursue military capabilities in excess of these requirements. Bangladesh's military capability will be structured to raise the cost of any attack to a level that defeats any rational calculus of aggression, while remaining within the resource constraints of Bangladesh's economy and the normative framework of its constitutional commitments.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Bangladesh's defense policy and the defense budget that implements it will be subject to robust parliamentary oversight and public accountability. The Ministry of Defence will publish an annual Defense Review that provides the public and parliament with an accurate assessment of Bangladesh's security environment, the state of its military capabilities, and the use of defense resources. Defense procurement will be conducted through transparent, competitive processes subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General, with results reported to parliament.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: HUMAN SECURITY AS A COMPONENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Bangladesh's security framework will recognize that the security of individual Bangladeshis from poverty, disease, environmental disaster, and political violence is integral to national security, not separate from it. The armed forces will maintain significant capability for disaster response and humanitarian assistance. Defense policy will support, rather than undermine, the broader social and economic development objectives of the state.

14.2 The Second Draft Framework: Threat-Response Architecture

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

A second draft approach organizes the defense policy framework around specific threats and the responses required to address them. This approach is more operational and less principled than the first draft but provides clearer guidance for force structure and procurement decisions.

THREAT ONE: CONVENTIONAL MILITARY AGGRESSION FROM NEIGHBORING STATES

While the probability of direct military aggression against Bangladesh from any neighboring state is currently assessed as low, the consequences of such aggression would be catastrophic, and the military capabilities of Bangladesh's neighbors are substantial and growing. Bangladesh must maintain sufficient military capability to deter such aggression and to impose significant costs on any aggressor if deterrence fails.

Response requirements: A land force capable of defending key terrain features and critical infrastructure; a naval force capable of deterring and, if necessary, engaging hostile naval forces in Bangladesh's territorial waters and EEZ; an air force capable of contesting airspace over Bangladesh and imposing costs on aerial attackers; an integrated air defense system capable of protecting critical national assets from aerial bombardment.

THREAT TWO: GRAY ZONE AND HYBRID THREATS

Bangladesh faces a range of threats below the threshold of conventional military attack, including information warfare, cyber attacks, economic coercion, support to extremist or criminal organizations, and political interference by external actors. These threats are growing in salience and sophistication as state and non-state actors develop more refined capabilities for gray zone operations.

Response requirements: Cyber security capabilities, both defensive and offensive; intelligence services capable of detecting and attributing gray zone operations; legal frameworks adequate to address hybrid threats while preserving civil liberties; diplomatic and economic countermeasures to deter and respond to coercive measures short of military force.

THREAT THREE: SPILLOVER FROM MYANMAR'S INTERNAL CONFLICT

The ongoing civil war in Myanmar poses a direct and immediate security threat to Bangladesh through armed incursions, refugee flows, cross-border crime, and the destabilization of Bangladesh's southeastern border regions. This threat requires immediate attention and sustained management.

Response requirements: Enhanced border security forces and infrastructure; intelligence cooperation with regional partners; contingency plans for responding to armed incursions; diplomatic engagement with all parties to the Myanmar conflict; a long-term strategy for managing the Rohingya refugee situation.

THREAT FOUR: MARITIME SECURITY THREATS

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's extensive maritime zone faces threats from piracy, illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human smuggling, and potential hostile state naval operations. These threats require both law enforcement and military responses.

Response requirements: A naval force adequate for EEZ patrol and maritime domain awareness; coast guard capabilities for law enforcement operations; maritime patrol aircraft for aerial surveillance; cooperation with regional partners in multilateral maritime security frameworks.

THREAT FIVE: INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS

Bangladesh faces internal security challenges including violent extremism, organized crime, ethnic tensions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the potential radicalization of portions of the Rohingya refugee population. These threats require primarily law enforcement responses but have military dimensions in the most extreme cases.

Response requirements: Well-trained and adequately equipped security forces with clear legal mandates; intelligence services capable of detecting and disrupting violent extremist networks; community engagement programs that address the social conditions that generate extremist appeal; effective rehabilitation and de-radicalization programs.

THREAT SIX: NATURAL DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Bangladesh's extraordinary vulnerability to natural disasters, including cyclones, floods, storm surges, and the long-term effects of climate change including sea-level rise, is among the most serious threats to the welfare of Bangladesh's population. The armed forces play an essential role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

Response requirements: Military units specially trained and equipped for disaster response, including helicopter transport capacity, medical capability, engineering assets for infrastructure repair, and coordination mechanisms with civilian disaster management agencies; pre-positioned stocks of emergency supplies in disaster-vulnerable areas; planning for large-scale population displacement in response to extreme weather events.

14.3 The Third Draft Framework: Capability-Based Planning

A third approach to defense policy drafting focuses on capabilities rather than threats, asking what Bangladesh needs to be able to do in its defense and security context rather than specifying responses to particular adversaries.

This approach has the advantage of providing more stable guidance over time, since capabilities endure even as specific threats evolve. It also aligns better with the planning processes of the armed services, which are organized around capability development rather than threat-specific responses.

The core capabilities that Bangladesh requires include:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE: The capacity to collect, process, and analyze information about security threats across all domains, including technical intelligence from satellites and signals, human intelligence from networks of sources, and open-source intelligence from public media and databases. This capability is the foundation for all other defense capabilities, since military force applied without accurate intelligence is often wasted or counterproductive.

COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS: The secure, resilient communications and information management systems that allow civilian authorities to direct military operations and military commanders to coordinate their forces. Modern warfare places extraordinary demands on C3 systems, and the degradation of these systems through cyber attack, electronic warfare, or physical destruction can rapidly compromise military effectiveness.

LAND FORCES: Sufficient ground combat capability to defend Bangladesh's borders, protect critical infrastructure, respond to internal security emergencies, and contribute to peacekeeping operations. Land forces must be organized, trained, and equipped for a range of contingencies from high-intensity conventional combat to complex peacekeeping environments.

NAVAL FORCES: Sufficient maritime capability to monitor and protect Bangladesh's extensive maritime zone, deter hostile naval intrusions, and maintain the freedom of navigation upon which Bangladesh's trade-dependent economy depends. Naval forces must include both surface combatants for presence and engagement, submarine forces for deterrence and surveillance, and maritime patrol aircraft for domain awareness.

AIR FORCES: Sufficient aerial capability to contest Bangladesh's airspace in extremis, to support ground operations, to conduct maritime patrol, and to provide transport and logistics support. The critical gap in Bangladesh's current air force capability, the lack of modern multi-role fighter aircraft, is the most urgent capability priority.

INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE: The ability to protect critical national assets including the capital, major ports and infrastructure, and military installations from aerial attack, using a layered combination of surface-to-air missile systems, anti-aircraft artillery, and fighter aircraft.

CYBER AND INFORMATION OPERATIONS: The capacity to defend Bangladesh's military and civilian information systems from attack, to conduct intelligence collection in cyberspace, and in extremis to conduct offensive cyber operations against adversary targets.

DISASTER RESPONSE AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: The capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to major natural disasters, including the movement of large military units, the maintenance of essential services in affected areas, and the coordination of international humanitarian assistance.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LEGISLATIVE INVESTIGATION AND REFORM

15.1 The Current Legislative Framework: Assessment and Critique

Bangladesh's defense legislative framework is a patchwork of colonial-era legislation, post-independence modifications, and ad hoc enactments that fails to provide the coherent, rights-protecting, accountability-ensuring legal framework that a modern democratic defense system requires.

The primary pieces of defense legislation include the Bangladesh Army Act 1952 (inherited from Pakistan), the Bangladesh Air Force Act 1953, the Bangladesh Navy Ordinance 1961, the Special Powers Act 1974, the Special Security Forces Act 1986, and various procurement regulations and administrative orders. None of these instruments reflects the democratic principles of the 1972 Constitution or the contemporary international standards for human rights protection in security contexts.

The Army Act 1952, for example, provides for a system of military justice that is dominated by the chain of command, with limited independent judicial oversight. Courts martial are convened at the discretion of commanding officers, the accused has limited rights to legal representation, and appeals mechanisms are weak. This system falls significantly short of international fair trial standards as articulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bangladesh is a party.

The Special Powers Act 1974 authorizes preventive detention for periods of up to thirty days without judicial review, with the possibility of indefinite extension through executive order. This provision is inconsistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' requirement that any person deprived of liberty must be brought promptly before a judge, and its consistent abuse for political purposes suggests that it serves functions other than the genuine security purposes its text describes.

15.2 The Case for a National Defense Act

The most significant legislative reform required for Bangladesh's defense system is the enactment of a comprehensive National Defense Act that would provide a coherent statutory framework for defense governance. Such an Act would replace the current patchwork of colonial legislation with a modern, rights-protective framework that reflects Bangladesh's constitutional values and international legal obligations.

A National Defense Act should address several key subjects. It should define the constitutional relationship between civilian political authority and the armed forces, including clear lines of accountability from the service chiefs through the Minister of Defence to the Cabinet and Parliament. It should establish the legal framework for military justice, replacing the colonial-era courts martial system with a system that meets international fair trial standards while maintaining appropriate military discipline. It should create a clear statutory framework for the procurement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

of defense equipment, including anti-corruption requirements, parliamentary oversight provisions, and audit mechanisms.

The Act should also address the conditions of service for military personnel, including their constitutional rights, the limitations on those rights in the military context, and the remedies available when their rights are violated. The experience of states that have undertaken comparable legislative reforms, including Germany, Canada, and Australia, demonstrates that a coherent defense legal framework significantly improves both military effectiveness and democratic accountability.

15.3 Intelligence Oversight Legislation

The reform of Bangladesh's intelligence legislative framework is a companion necessity to the broader defense legislative reform. Intelligence services that operate without clear legal mandates, without effective oversight, and without meaningful accountability mechanisms are both ineffective (because they lack the legal tools required for legitimate intelligence collection) and dangerous (because they are prone to abuse).

An Intelligence Oversight Act would define the legal powers of Bangladesh's intelligence services, specify the oversight mechanisms to which they are subject, and create remedies for individuals whose rights are violated by intelligence operations. The Act should establish an independent parliamentary intelligence committee with access to classified information and the authority to review intelligence operations and expenditures. It should create a system of judicial authorization for particularly intrusive intelligence operations, including communications surveillance. And it should establish an Inspector General of Intelligence with the mandate and resources to investigate complaints about intelligence service conduct.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS AND LOOKING FORWARD

16.1 The Enduring Tension: Security and Liberty

The history of defense policy is in large part the history of the tension between security and liberty. States that prioritize security above all other values tend toward authoritarianism; states that prioritize liberty above all other values tend toward vulnerability. The challenge is to find and maintain the balance point at which security is sufficient to protect the liberty of citizens without itself becoming the principal threat to that liberty.

This tension is particularly acute in Bangladesh's context, given its history of security institutions being used as instruments of political repression. The Special Powers Act, the Rapid Action Battalion's record of extrajudicial violence, the use of military intelligence for political surveillance, and the role of the armed forces in political transitions all illustrate the ways in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

which security institutions have threatened rather than protected the liberty of Bangladeshi citizens.

The philosophical tradition offers several frameworks for navigating this tension. John Rawls's concept of justice as fairness, which asks what principles of governance free and equal citizens would choose behind a "veil of ignorance" that prevents them from knowing their specific social position, suggests that citizens would choose security institutions that protect everyone equally rather than that protect the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable. Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics suggests that legitimate security decisions are those that can survive open, rational public deliberation in which all affected parties can participate. Amartya Sen's capabilities approach suggests that security should be understood in terms of its contribution to the range of things people can actually do and be, rather than merely as a condition of territorial inviolability.

All of these frameworks converge on a common conclusion: legitimate defense policy in a democratic state must be grounded in genuine public consent, must protect the rights and capabilities of all citizens rather than the interests of a narrow elite, and must be subject to continuous democratic scrutiny and revision.

16.2 The Philosophical Foundations of Future Policy

Bangladesh's defense policy for the coming decades must be grounded in a philosophical foundation that is adequate to its complexity. It must draw on the universal moral tradition of human dignity and natural rights, on the constitutional commitments articulated in 1972 and reaffirmed through subsequent democratic struggles, on the Islamic ethical tradition that provides a moral framework for the majority of Bangladesh's citizens, and on the contemporary international normative order embodied in the UN Charter and international human rights law.

This philosophical foundation does not provide simple answers to specific policy questions. But it does provide the evaluative framework within which specific policy choices can be assessed and justified. A defense procurement decision that serves the personal financial interests of decision-makers rather than the genuine security needs of Bangladesh is not only illegal; it is morally indefensible. A security operation that kills civilians in the name of counter-terrorism violates not only international humanitarian law but the fundamental moral principles that any defensible defense policy must affirm. A civil-military relationship that subordinates democratic governance to military institutional interests is not only unconstitutional; it is philosophically unjustifiable in a polity that affirms the dignity and sovereignty of its citizens.

16.3 The Path Forward: Recommendations for Policy Development

Based on the analysis in this first part of the textbook, several recommendations emerge for the process of developing Bangladesh's comprehensive defense policy.

First, Bangladesh should establish a formal, institutionalized National Security Council process that brings together the political leadership, military leadership, intelligence services, foreign ministry, and relevant civilian ministries for regular, systematic review of the national security

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

environment. This process should generate annual National Security Assessments that are the foundation for all subsequent policy and procurement decisions.

Second, Bangladesh should commission a comprehensive Defense Strategic Review, modeled on similar reviews conducted by Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and other Westminster-model democracies, that assesses the current state of Bangladesh's military capabilities against identified security requirements and produces a public document articulating Bangladesh's defense priorities, capability gaps, and resource requirements for the next decade.

Third, the National Parliament should strengthen its defense oversight role by establishing a dedicated, bipartisan Defence and Security Committee with access to appropriate classified information, the resources to commission independent expert analysis, and the mandate to produce regular public reports on the state of Bangladesh's defense.

Fourth, the reform of Bangladesh's defense legal framework should be initiated as a priority legislative project, with the development of a National Defense Act, an Intelligence Oversight Act, and the reform or repeal of the Special Powers Act as the primary objectives.

Fifth, Bangladesh should invest significantly in the academic and policy infrastructure for strategic studies and defense policy research. The current absence of well-resourced, independent research institutions focused on Bangladesh's security environment is a significant weakness in the policy development ecosystem.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS FOR DEFENSE POLICY EVALUATION

17.1 How to Evaluate a Defense Policy: Criteria and Methodology

Evaluating whether a defense policy is effective, legitimate, and well-designed requires criteria that go beyond simple military metrics. A comprehensive evaluation framework must assess multiple dimensions of policy quality.

The first evaluation dimension is strategic adequacy: does the policy address the genuine security threats that Bangladesh faces, in a manner proportionate to their severity and likelihood? A policy that focuses on low-probability threats while neglecting high-probability ones, or that allocates resources in ways inconsistent with threat priorities, fails this test regardless of how sophisticated its analysis appears.

The second dimension is resource realism: is the policy implementable within Bangladesh's actual and foreseeable resource constraints? A policy that requires defense spending at levels that would require either massive cuts to social programs or economically damaging levels of borrowing is not a serious policy regardless of its strategic logic.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The third dimension is democratic legitimacy: has the policy been developed through a process that reflects democratic values, with meaningful parliamentary oversight, public transparency, and the accountability mechanisms necessary to prevent corruption and misuse of authority?

The fourth dimension is legal compliance: does the policy operate within the framework of Bangladesh's Constitution and international legal obligations? A defense policy that authorizes activities inconsistent with constitutional rights or international law is not only morally problematic but practically counterproductive, since it undermines the international credibility and domestic legitimacy upon which effective security policy ultimately depends.

The fifth dimension is institutional effectiveness: does the policy support the development of professional, accountable, and effective defense institutions that can actually implement it? Good policy documents are worthless without the institutional capacity to translate them into action.

17.2 The Analytical Framework for Ongoing Assessment

Defense policy requires not only initial development but continuous assessment and revision as the security environment evolves. The framework for ongoing assessment should include several mechanisms.

Regular intelligence assessments of the threat environment, conducted by the intelligence community and made available to appropriate civilian oversight authorities, provide the factual foundation for policy review. Periodic independent reviews of military capability and readiness, conducted by bodies outside the chain of command, provide an honest assessment of whether the armed forces can actually perform the missions assigned to them. Parliamentary scrutiny of defense budget execution, procurement decisions, and operational outcomes provides democratic accountability for the use of defense resources. And academic and civil society analysis of defense policy and its implementation provides the critical perspective that official assessments are structurally ill-positioned to provide.

The integration of these assessment mechanisms into a regular, institutionalized policy review cycle, comparable to the annual defense reviews conducted by major democracies, would significantly improve the quality and responsiveness of Bangladesh's defense policy over time.

CONCLUSION TO PART ONE: THE INTELLECTUAL ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE FUTURE

This first part of the textbook has constructed the intellectual architecture upon which Bangladesh's defense policy development must rest. It has traced the philosophical roots of the concept of defense from antiquity through modernity, examined the theoretical frameworks of international relations that illuminate Bangladesh's strategic position, investigated the historical formation of Bangladesh's security identity, excavated the constitutional and legal framework

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that governs defense policymaking, analyzed the geopolitical pressures that shape strategic choices, examined the jurisprudential traditions relevant to the normative foundations of defense policy, and begun the process of translating these foundations into the elements of a comprehensive defense policy framework.

Several themes recur across these diverse analytical dimensions and deserve particular emphasis as the foundation for the subsequent parts of this textbook.

The first recurring theme is the indissoluble connection between democratic governance and effective defense policy. Bangladesh cannot build a defense policy adequate to its security challenges while simultaneously maintaining the political and institutional dysfunctions that have historically undermined its democratic governance. Civil-military relations that place military interests above democratic accountability, security legislation that serves political rather than genuine security purposes, intelligence services that operate outside legal constraints, and procurement systems riddled with corruption all directly undermine military effectiveness as well as democratic values. Democratic reform and defense reform are not in tension; they are the same project.

The second recurring theme is the necessity of strategic realism without strategic fatalism. Bangladesh faces genuine and in some cases severe security challenges. These challenges cannot be wished away by proclamations of peaceful intent or resolved entirely through diplomatic skill. But they also cannot be addressed through military solutions alone, since Bangladesh's power asymmetries relative to its principal potential adversaries are too great for any foreseeable military buildup to overcome. The art of Bangladesh's defense policy lies in combining genuine military deterrence with aggressive diplomacy, multilateral institutional engagement, economic interdependence, and the cultivation of international legitimacy.

The third recurring theme is the importance of historical consciousness. Bangladesh's strategic choices are shaped by historical experiences, including the Liberation War, the coup and counter-coup period, the years of military-dominated politics, and the 2024 revolution, that create both constraints and opportunities that abstract strategic analysis cannot capture. Policy makers who ignore this history will reproduce its pathologies; those who understand it can build on its achievements while avoiding its failures.

The fourth recurring theme is resource realism. Bangladesh is not a rich country, and its defense resources are genuinely constrained. A defense policy that does not engage honestly with resource constraints is not a serious policy. Priority setting, efficiency improvement, indigenous defense industry development, and the mobilization of international defense cooperation are all essential components of a credible resource strategy.

The fifth and most fundamental recurring theme is the sovereignty of the people. Bangladesh's defense policy exists to protect the Bangladeshi people, all of them, not merely those who are politically powerful, economically privileged, or strategically located. A defense policy that serves the security needs of the many rather than the interests of the few, that is accountable to the democratic representatives of the people, that respects the constitutional rights of citizens even when they are in tension with security objectives, and that honestly accounts for the costs

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and benefits of its choices to the people who bear those costs and deserves those benefits, is the only kind of defense policy that is consistent with Bangladesh's constitutional values and its democratic aspirations.

The fourteen remaining parts of this textbook will build on these foundations to develop specific policy frameworks, legislative drafts, procurement strategies, diplomatic frameworks, and institutional designs that translate the intellectual architecture of Part One into operational guidance for Bangladesh's defense policy development. The challenge is enormous, the stakes are high, and the opportunity is genuine. Bangladesh's geographic position, its demographic weight, its economic dynamism, and its democratic values equip it to play a significant and constructive role in the evolving security order of the Bay of Bengal and South Asia. Realizing that potential requires the kind of serious, comprehensive, and honest defense policy engagement that this textbook is designed to support.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART ONE

Classical and Philosophical Works

Kautilya. Arthashastra. Translated by L.N. Rangarajan. Penguin, 1992.

Sun Tzu. The Art of War. Translated by Samuel B. Griffith. Oxford University Press, 1963.

Thucydides. History of the Peloponnesian War. Translated by Rex Warner. Penguin, 1972.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince. Translated by Harvey Mansfield. University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Edited by C.B. Macpherson. Penguin, 1968.

Locke, John. Two Treatises of Government. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. The Social Contract. Translated by Maurice Cranston. Penguin, 1968.

Kant, Immanuel. Perpetual Peace and Other Essays. Translated by Ted Humphrey. Hackett, 1983.

Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton University Press, 1976.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783. Little, Brown, 1890.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

International Relations Theory

Waltz, Kenneth N. Theory of International Politics. Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Mearsheimer, John J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. W.W. Norton, 2001.

Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye. Power and Interdependence. Little, Brown, 1977.

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear. 2nd ed. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Wendt, Alexander. Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton University Press, 1976.

Schelling, Thomas C. The Strategy of Conflict. Harvard University Press, 1960.

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. Grove Press, 1963.

Bangladesh and Regional Security

Ali, S. Mahmud. Understanding Bangladesh. Hurst, 2010.

Hossain, Ishtiaq. Bangladesh Politics: Confrontation, Partisanship and Governance. University Press Limited, 2013.

Franda, Marcus. Bangladesh: The First Decade. South Asian Publishers, 1982.

Riaz, Ali. Bangladesh: A Political History since Independence. I.B. Tauris, 2016.

Codron, Jeremie. The Military and Democracy in Bangladesh. New Delhi: Manohar, 2007.

Constitutional and Legal Sources

Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 1972 (as amended through 2011).

Special Powers Act, 1974 (Bangladesh).

Army Act, 1952 (applicable in Bangladesh).

United Nations Charter, 1945.

Geneva Conventions, 1949, and Additional Protocols, 1977.

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Strategic Policy Documents and Reports

Forces Goal 2030 Overview, Bangladesh Armed Forces Division.

Bangladesh Ministry of Finance, Budget Documents, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.

Army Recognition, "Bangladesh Modernizes All Branches of Its Military," August 2025.

The Diplomat, "Revisiting Forces Goal 2030," December 2024.

Observer Research Foundation, "Deciphering Dhaka's Diversifying Defence Inventory and Partnerships," September 2025.

Asia Times, "Turkey-Bangladesh Air Defense Deal Jolts South Asia's Skies," October 2025.

End of Part One

Part Two will examine in detail the comparative analysis of defense policy frameworks from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and beyond, with specific attention to the lessons applicable to Bangladesh's unique strategic context. It will examine the Indian, Pakistani, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Turkish defense policy models in depth, assess Bangladesh's position within the broader South Asian security complex, and develop the second major draft of Bangladesh's defense policy framework based on comparative insights.

Academic Note: This textbook is designed for advanced study in defense policy, international relations, strategic studies, law, and political science. It draws on scholarly literature, primary legal and constitutional sources, recent policy analysis, and applied strategic theory. The drafts of defense policy frameworks included in various chapters are analytical and educational documents designed to stimulate critical thinking and policy discussion; they do not constitute official policy guidance. Students and researchers are encouraged to engage critically with all frameworks presented, to consult primary sources directly, and to contribute to the ongoing scholarly and policy debate about Bangladesh's security future.

Second Part of Sixteen

FOREWORD TO PART TWO

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part One of this textbook established the philosophical, historical, constitutional, and theoretical foundations upon which a serious analysis of Bangladesh defense policy must rest. It traced the intellectual genealogy of defense thinking from antiquity through modernity, excavated the historical formation of Bangladesh's security identity through the colonial period, Liberation War, and post-independence turbulence, and began constructing the analytical scaffolding for a necessity-based, democratically grounded defense policy framework.

Part Two builds on those foundations by turning the lens outward and then back inward with fresh precision. It examines how other states, particularly those facing analogous strategic challenges, have designed their defense policies, organized their armed forces, structured their legislative frameworks, and navigated the treacherous waters between great power competition and the preservation of strategic autonomy. The comparative method is not merely an academic exercise in this context. It is a practical tool: understanding how Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Israel, and other states of varying sizes and capabilities have grappled with structurally similar dilemmas yields insights that abstract theorizing alone cannot provide.

The global strategic environment of 2024 through 2026 has itself become a laboratory for testing theories about alliance management, strategic balancing, deterrence, and the limits of international institutions. The 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue marked a subtle but telling shift in Indo-Pacific geopolitics. What is emerging is an Indo-Pacific defined by strategic pluralism, overlapping coalitions, differentiated institutions, and shared but flexible rules, a political order that privileges agency over alignment. War on the Rocks This shift is directly relevant to Bangladesh, which has been among the most active practitioners of strategic pluralism in South Asia, cultivating relationships with China, Turkey, Japan, the United States, and Pakistan simultaneously while maintaining its principled non-alignment.

Part Two also undertakes a deeper examination of Bangladesh's own recent defense engagement trajectory under the Yunus-led interim government, analyzing the specific procurement decisions, partnership agreements, and diplomatic initiatives of 2024-2026 in the context of the strategic frameworks developed in Part One. It develops more detailed draft policy frameworks for specific sectors of Bangladesh's defense architecture, including the maritime domain, the air domain, cyber security, and the indigenous defense industry.

The aspirations are high, the analytical tools are sophisticated, and the stakes could not be more serious. Let us begin.

CHAPTER ONE: THE COMPARATIVE METHOD IN DEFENSE POLICY ANALYSIS

1.1 Why Compare? The Value and Limits of Cross-National Defense Analysis

The comparative method is one of social science's most powerful tools for generating insights about complex phenomena that cannot be studied through controlled experiments. By examining

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

how different states have approached structurally similar problems, the analyst can identify patterns, test hypotheses, and derive lessons that transcend the specific context of any single case.

In defense policy analysis, the comparative method has particular value because the phenomena of interest, wars, security dilemmas, deterrence dynamics, civil-military relations, defense procurement processes, are simultaneously universal in their structural features and highly particular in their specific manifestations. Every state faces the fundamental challenge of providing security for its population under conditions of anarchy, uncertainty, and resource constraint. But the specific configurations of geography, history, culture, political institutions, economic capacity, and threat environment that shape how each state responds to this challenge are unique.

The comparative method allows the analyst to hold certain variables constant while varying others, illuminating how differences in specific features, such as democratic governance, geographic position, or economic development level, affect defense policy outcomes. A comparison between Vietnam and Bangladesh, for example, can illuminate how two medium-sized states with histories of colonial subjugation and post-independence conflict have navigated the challenge of maintaining strategic autonomy in a neighborhood dominated by much larger powers. The differences between the two cases, in terms of their specific threat environments, their political systems, and their economic trajectories, make the comparison illuminating rather than trivial.

However, the comparative method has limits that careful analysis must respect. The temptation to apply lessons from one context directly to another without accounting for the differences between them is a recurrent pitfall of comparative defense analysis. Israel's success in developing a sophisticated indigenous defense industry, for example, cannot simply be replicated by Bangladesh through an act of political will. It reflects decades of sustained investment, a specifically motivated population, a unique threat environment, and access to technology transfers from the United States that are not available on comparable terms to Bangladesh. The comparative lesson is not "do what Israel did" but rather "understand what conditions make indigenous defense industry development possible and assess how those conditions can be cultivated in Bangladesh's specific context."

1.2 Criteria for Case Selection

The cases examined in this part are selected on the basis of their relevance to Bangladesh's specific strategic challenges. The selection criteria include: structural similarity of the strategic position (smaller state managing relations with larger neighbors), comparable economic development level at the time of key defense policy choices, democratic governance as a factor shaping civil-military relations and procurement accountability, geographic and maritime dimensions of the security challenge, and the availability of sufficient publicly documented information to support detailed analysis.

The primary comparative cases are Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Israel, and Singapore. Secondary cases include Finland, which offers important lessons about small state

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

defense in a neighborhood dominated by a great power, and Australia, which provides insights about the development of a comprehensive defense white paper process and an ambitious indigenous defense industry strategy. The Indian case is examined separately as the dominant regional power in Bangladesh's neighborhood rather than as a comparative model.

CHAPTER TWO: VIETNAM - THE MASTER CLASS IN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

2.1 Vietnam's Strategic Position: Analogies and Differences

Vietnam's strategic situation offers perhaps the closest structural parallel to Bangladesh's among the major comparative cases. Vietnam is a medium-sized state of approximately ninety-seven million people, sharing a land border with China, its most important trading partner and most significant security challenge, while simultaneously seeking to develop its economy through integration with the global economy and managing a dense network of territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The analogy with Bangladesh has obvious limits. Vietnam's experience includes not only the American war but a millennia-long history of resistance to Chinese domination that has shaped a distinctive strategic culture of determined self-reliance. Bangladesh lacks this deep historical tradition of resistance specifically to great power neighbors, though the Liberation War of 1971 certainly provides a comparable foundational experience of fighting for independence against an overwhelmingly stronger adversary. The Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh's southeastern border region has some structural parallels to the South China Sea disputes, in that both involve the presence of a destabilizing situation in a strategically sensitive border zone that neither state can fully control.

What is most instructive about Vietnam is not any single policy choice but the integrated logic of its strategic posture, which combines several elements in ways that Bangladesh can profitably study.

2.2 The "Four Nos" Doctrine: Content, Application, and Limits

Vietnam's foundational defense doctrine is encapsulated in the "Four Nos" principles: no military alliances, no foreign military bases on Vietnamese territory, no reliance on any country to combat other countries, and no use of force or threat of force in international relations. This framework, originally articulated in Vietnam's 1998 National Defense White Paper and periodically reaffirmed, is Vietnam's formalization of strategic non-alignment adapted to its specific circumstances.

The Four Nos doctrine has several important features from Bangladesh's analytical perspective. First, it is stated in clear, public terms that create predictability and credibility. Potential adversaries and partners alike know what Vietnam will and will not do, which reduces

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

miscalculation risk and creates a stable framework for bilateral relationships. Second, it is genuinely implemented: Vietnam has consistently declined to enter formal military alliances with the United States despite deep and growing defense cooperation that has included the lifting of the arms embargo in 2016 and a series of significant arms transfers. Third, it is not absolute passivity: Vietnam maintains a significant and growing military capability that makes the cost of Chinese aggression real, and it actively cultivates multiple strategic partnerships as a hedge against Chinese coercion.

Vietnam has added nine new comprehensive strategic partnerships in the past three years, including with Australia, the United States, Japan and South Korea. Broadening its network of strategic partnerships reflects Hanoi's foreign policy doctrine of diversification and multilateralisation. East Asia Forum This pattern of dense partnership building without formal alliance commitment is the contemporary operationalization of the Four Nos: Vietnam maintains strategic flexibility while creating a web of relationships that raise the cost of Chinese aggression by implicating multiple major powers.

The relevance to Bangladesh is direct. Bangladesh's existing foreign policy principle of "friendship with all, malice toward none" is structurally equivalent to the Four Nos, but it lacks the specificity, the formal articulation, and the consistent implementation that give Vietnam's doctrine its strategic weight. A Bangladesh defense policy could profitably formalize its non-alignment principles in terms comparable to the Four Nos, not as a copy of Vietnam's doctrine but as an adaptation of its logic to Bangladesh's specific circumstances.

The limits of the Four Nos doctrine must also be noted. Vietnam's application of the principle of "no reliance on any country to combat others" has been tested by the reality of deepening US-Vietnam defense cooperation, which is clearly intended to strengthen Vietnam's position relative to China. Critics argue that the doctrine has become a political fiction that provides ideological cover for what is in substance a US-leaning strategic posture. This tension between formal neutrality and practical strategic alignment is one that Bangladesh must also navigate as it deepens defense relationships with multiple partners.

2.3 Vietnam's Military Doctrine: People's War and Conventional Modernization

Vietnam's military doctrine reflects the integration of its foundational People's War tradition, derived from the successful strategies of Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap against French and American forces, with the imperative to develop conventional military capabilities adequate for the twenty-first century threat environment.

People's War doctrine in its classical form emphasizes protracted conflict, the mobilization of the entire population for resistance, the strategic use of terrain, the exploitation of the adversary's political vulnerabilities, and the asymmetric wearing down of a conventionally superior adversary rather than direct military confrontation. This doctrine was spectacularly successful against colonial and neocolonial adversaries whose will to sustain a costly conflict could ultimately be broken. It is less applicable to the contemporary challenge of deterring Chinese naval and air power in the South China Sea, where the speed and lethality of modern military operations do not permit the protracted mobilization that People's War requires.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Vietnam's response to this doctrinal challenge has been to maintain the People's War tradition as a residual framework for extreme scenarios, including a hypothetical Chinese invasion of Vietnamese mainland territory, while investing heavily in the conventional capabilities required to deter and if necessary resist Chinese power projection in the maritime domain. This dual-track approach, combining asymmetric and conventional deterrence, is directly applicable to Bangladesh's defense planning.

For Bangladesh, the People's War tradition has its own analog in the Liberation War of 1971, which demonstrated that a determined popular resistance can impose enormous costs on a conventionally superior adversary. This tradition provides a foundation for a doctrine of national resistance that complements rather than replaces conventional military capability. A Bangladesh that has the will and the preparations to mobilize the entire national population for resistance against aggression is a fundamentally different strategic proposition than one that relies entirely on its regular armed forces, no matter how well-equipped.

2.4 Vietnam's Defense Industry: Ambitions and Realities

Vietnam has invested significantly in developing indigenous defense production capability, including small arms, armored vehicles, military vessels, and increasingly sophisticated electronic systems. The defense industry development strategy has been guided by the principle of reducing import dependence while using technology transfer arrangements to build domestic capability.

The Vietnamese case illustrates both the potential and the timeline of indigenous defense industry development. After decades of investment, Vietnam can now produce a meaningful range of military equipment domestically, but it remains heavily dependent on imported systems for the most technologically sophisticated elements of its military capability, including combat aircraft, submarines, and advanced missile systems. The lesson for Bangladesh is that indigenous defense industry development is a multi-decade project requiring sustained commitment, patient investment, and realistic expectations about the pace of progress.

Vietnam's specific experience with Russian arms imports, which have constituted the core of its major weapons systems including submarines, fighter aircraft, and surface-to-air missiles, also holds lessons for Bangladesh. Russian arms are relatively affordable and come with limited political conditionality, but they generate long-term maintenance dependencies and are increasingly difficult to sustain given Russia's focus on its own war in Ukraine. Vietnam has begun diversifying away from Russian arms toward a wider range of suppliers including Israel, Czech Republic, and potentially Western systems, a process of procurement diversification directly analogous to Bangladesh's own ongoing effort.

CHAPTER THREE: SOUTH KOREA - THE ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT MASTER CLASS

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

3.1 South Korea's Strategic Dilemma: The Foundational Challenge

South Korea's strategic dilemma is structurally more acute than Bangladesh's in several respects: it faces an existential military threat from North Korea, a nuclear-armed state whose regime has openly declared its willingness to use military force to reunite the peninsula under its control. At the same time, South Korea must manage its relationship with China, its largest trading partner by a substantial margin, which has its own interests in the Korean Peninsula that are not identical to South Korea's and which has demonstrated its willingness to use economic coercion, including the THAAD deployment controversy, to influence South Korean security choices.

The South Korean case offers Bangladesh lessons precisely because it is a harder case: if South Korea can maintain strategic flexibility and economic prosperity while managing these simultaneous pressures from a nuclear-armed adversary and a great power trading partner, the lessons of how it has done so are highly relevant to Bangladesh's less extreme but structurally analogous situation.

3.2 The Alliance with the United States: Management and Autonomy

South Korea's defense relationship with the United States, formalized in the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, is the most important single element of its security architecture. The United States maintains approximately 28,500 military personnel in South Korea, operates the Combined Forces Command that would direct operations in a Korean conflict, and provides an extended nuclear deterrent against North Korean nuclear threats. This relationship is the closest thing to a genuine security guarantee that any state can offer, and it is the foundation of South Korea's defense against North Korean aggression.

Yet South Korea has also consistently sought to manage this alliance relationship in ways that preserve South Korean strategic autonomy rather than subordinating Korean interests to American preferences. The issue of Operational Control (OPCON) transfer, the process by which South Korea has been seeking to recover independent command of its forces from the Combined Forces Command, illustrates this dynamic. South Korea has repeatedly sought and received commitments from the United States to transfer OPCON, and repeatedly deferred actual transfer as security conditions deteriorated. This repeated deferral reflects the genuine tension between the aspiration for strategic autonomy and the practical security value of deep alliance integration.

For Bangladesh, the South Korean experience suggests that even formal alliance relationships can be managed in ways that preserve significant autonomy if the smaller partner is strategically sophisticated, economically valuable, and politically determined. But it also suggests the limits of this management: when North Korean threats intensify, South Korea's ability to maintain distance from US preferences is constrained by its dependence on US security guarantees in ways that Bangladesh's more autonomous posture does not face.

3.3 South Korea's Defense White Paper: Transparency and Strategic Communication

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

South Korea's Defense White Paper, published annually by the Ministry of National Defense, is one of the most detailed and analytically sophisticated public defense documents produced by any state in the Asia-Pacific region. It provides a comprehensive assessment of the security environment, a detailed exposition of South Korea's military capabilities and doctrine, an analysis of North Korean military forces, and a statement of South Korea's defense policy principles and procurement priorities.

The White Paper serves multiple strategic functions simultaneously. Domestically, it provides parliamentary oversight and public understanding of defense policy. Diplomatically, it communicates South Korea's strategic intentions and capabilities to allies and potential adversaries, reducing uncertainty and misperception. Institutionally, it provides a framework for coherence across the various organizations responsible for defense, from the armed services to the intelligence community to the foreign ministry.

Bangladesh currently produces no comparable public defense document. The argument sometimes made against publishing such a document, that transparency compromises security, is not convincing on examination. Major adversaries can assess Bangladesh's military capabilities through satellite imagery, technical intelligence, and public information about procurement contracts regardless of what Bangladesh publishes or withholds. The strategic cost of opacity, which includes reduced democratic accountability, diplomatic confusion among partners, and incoherence in institutional planning, substantially outweighs the marginal security benefit of denying publicly available information to adversaries.

The development of a Bangladesh Defense White Paper, modeled on the South Korean precedent but adapted to Bangladesh's specific circumstances, is one of the most important institutional recommendations that emerges from this comparative analysis. Such a document would force the discipline of comprehensive strategic assessment, create accountability for stated policy goals, and signal to international partners that Bangladesh approaches its defense with the seriousness and sophistication that genuine strategic engagement requires.

3.4 South Korea's Defense Industrial Complex: The Transformation Model

South Korea's indigenous defense industry is among the most successful examples of defense industrial development outside the major powers, and its trajectory offers the most instructive comparative case for Bangladesh's own defense industry ambitions.

South Korea began its defense industrial development in the 1970s from a position of near-total dependence on imported equipment, primarily from the United States. President Park Chung-hee's government launched a deliberate defense industrialization strategy that combined state direction, heavy investment in defense-civil dual-use industries, systematic use of offset arrangements and technology transfer requirements in arms purchases, and long-term patient capital allocation that accepted early losses in exchange for long-term capability development.

The results, over five decades, have been transformative. South Korea is now a major global arms exporter, selling K9 self-propelled howitzers, K2 main battle tanks, T-50 advanced trainer aircraft, corvettes, submarines, and a growing range of other sophisticated military systems to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

customers across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The K9 howitzer, for example, is now the dominant artillery system in numerous European militaries, a remarkable achievement for a state that was importing all of its military equipment fifty years ago.

The Korean defense industry success story reflects several enabling conditions that Bangladesh must cultivate over time: a strong state commitment sustained across multiple governments and ideological shifts; heavy investment in civilian technology and industrial capability (Samsung, Hyundai, and other Korean conglomerates that now produce defense equipment built their capabilities primarily in civilian markets); a domestic market large enough to justify the high fixed costs of defense production; systematic use of arms imports as technology transfer opportunities; and a long-term horizon that accepts high initial costs for the prospect of long-term independence and export revenues.

Bangladesh proposed a Defense Economic Zone of approximately Tk 15,000 crore that aims for self-reliance and eventual export. Defencejournalbd This initiative, if implemented with the sustained commitment and systematic approach that the Korean model demonstrates is necessary, could provide the institutional foundation for Bangladesh's defense industrial development. But the Korean comparison also illustrates the scale of the challenge: South Korea's current defense export success is the product of five decades of sustained investment, and Bangladesh should calibrate its expectations accordingly.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDONESIA - THE ARCHIPELAGIC POWER AND ITS SECURITY DOCTRINE

4.1 Indonesia's Strategic Situation: The World's Largest Archipelago

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelagic state with 17,508 islands spanning more than 5,000 kilometers from west to east, faces a security challenge of extraordinary complexity. Maintaining territorial integrity across such a vast and geographically fragmented space requires military capabilities, maritime domain awareness, and inter-service coordination that no comparable state has had to develop. Simultaneously, Indonesia must manage relationships with the United States, China, Australia, and other regional powers while maintaining its principled commitment to strategic autonomy under the "bebas dan aktif" (free and active) foreign policy doctrine.

The Indonesian security challenge has a maritime dimension that directly parallels Bangladesh's, though on a vastly larger scale. Indonesia's EEZ encompasses approximately 3.1 million square kilometers, compared to Bangladesh's 118,813 square kilometers. But the challenge of maritime domain awareness, the capacity to know what is happening in your maritime zone in real time, is qualitatively similar even if quantitatively different. And Indonesia's experience of developing maritime patrol, coastal defense, and naval capability in an environment of limited resources and competing military priorities offers lessons directly applicable to Bangladesh's naval development challenges.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

4.2 The "Bebas dan Aktif" Doctrine: Free and Active Foreign Policy

Indonesia's "bebas dan aktif" doctrine, formulated by Foreign Minister Hatta in 1948, is the longest-standing formal articulation of strategic non-alignment in the region and in many respects the model upon which subsequent non-alignment doctrines have been based. "Free" refers to freedom from entanglement in great power blocs; "active" refers to the commitment to play a constructive role in international affairs rather than adopting a passive neutrality.

The bebas dan aktif doctrine has proven remarkably durable across the enormous political changes that Indonesia has undergone, from Sukarno's guided democracy through the Suharto authoritarian period through the post-1998 democratic consolidation. This durability reflects the doctrine's deep roots in Indonesian political culture and the genuine strategic logic it embodies for a large, geographically complex, ethnically diverse state that cannot afford to be drawn into great power competition.

Rather than choosing sides, many states are shaping the region's rules and frameworks in ways that reflect their own strategic priorities, domestic constraints, and evolving threat perceptions. War on the Rocks Indonesia has been among the most sophisticated practitioners of this approach, using its size, its ASEAN chairmanship, its G-20 membership, and its substantial military and economic weight to shape regional and global norms in ways that serve Indonesian interests while maintaining the freedom of action that non-alignment provides.

For Bangladesh, the Indonesian model demonstrates that strategic non-alignment is not merely a principled stance but a sophisticated diplomatic practice that requires active cultivation. The "active" dimension of bebas dan aktif is as important as the "free" dimension: Bangladesh cannot protect its strategic autonomy by merely declaring non-alignment; it must actively engage with the diplomatic architecture of its region and beyond in ways that create facts, relationships, and normative frameworks favorable to Bangladeshi interests.

4.3 Indonesia's Defense Reform: The Territorial Command System

One of the most distinctive features of Indonesia's military organization is its territorial command system, which places military units throughout the country's territory with responsibilities that extend beyond conventional military tasks to include civil administration support, political intelligence, and the maintenance of internal security. This system, a legacy of the Suharto era's "dwifungsi" (dual function) doctrine that assigned the military both defense and sociopolitical roles, has been a persistent source of controversy in Indonesia's post-1998 democratic transition.

The territorial command system has both advantages and disadvantages that are instructive for Bangladesh. Its advantages include a deep integration of military capabilities throughout the national territory, enabling rapid response to internal security challenges and natural disasters across the archipelago; a detailed local knowledge base that enhances intelligence and civil-military cooperation; and a mobilization infrastructure that would be invaluable in the event of a major external threat. Its disadvantages include the tendency toward military involvement in politics, business, and civil administration that undermines democratic accountability; the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

distraction from combat readiness that comes from extensive civil duties; and the human rights abuses that have historically accompanied military involvement in civil governance.

Bangladesh's own military has elements of a territorial deployment that serve some of the same functions as Indonesia's territorial command system, and debates about the appropriate scope of military involvement in civil functions are structurally similar in the two countries. The Indonesian post-1998 experience of attempting to reduce military involvement in civil affairs while maintaining operational effectiveness offers relevant lessons, including the finding that such reform requires sustained political commitment, careful institutional redesign, and alternative civilian institutional development to fill the functions that the military previously performed.

4.4 Indonesia's Maritime Security: The World Maritime Axis Doctrine

President Joko Widodo's "Global Maritime Fulcrum" (Poros Maritim Dunia) doctrine, announced in 2014, sought to reorient Indonesia's strategic identity from a land-focused to a maritime-focused state, recognizing the centrality of maritime connectivity and maritime security to Indonesian national interests. This doctrinal reorientation has driven significant investment in maritime domain awareness, naval expansion, coast guard development, and maritime infrastructure.

The Global Maritime Fulcrum doctrine is directly relevant to Bangladesh, which has similarly been reorienting its strategic identity to account for the growing importance of its maritime domain. Bangladesh's successful assertion of its EEZ rights, its investment in naval capability under Forces Goal 2030, and its development of deep-sea port infrastructure at Matarbari all reflect an emerging maritime strategic consciousness that could be formalized and deepened through a comparable doctrinal statement.

Due to the importance of Bangladesh's vast maritime area of 118,813 square kilometers, high dependence of the country's economy on maritime resources, and the geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean, the Bangladesh Navy was given significant priority in the modernization program. The program aims to transform the Bangladesh Navy into a modern, well-equipped, three-dimensional force capable of conducting multi-domain operations. Wikipedia

---

CHAPTER FIVE: TURKEY - THE ARMS INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION AND ITS LESSONS

5.1 Turkey's Defense Transformation: From Import Dependence to Export Power

Turkey's defense industrial transformation over the past two decades represents one of the most dramatic and instructive cases of indigenous defense industry development in recent history. As recently as 2000, Turkey was importing approximately 80 percent of its defense requirements

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

from foreign suppliers, primarily the United States. By 2024, Turkey had reduced its import dependence to approximately 30 percent and had become a significant global arms exporter, with its Bayraktar TB2 combat drone achieving particular global prominence through its operational effectiveness in conflicts from Libya to Ukraine to the South Caucasus.

The Turkish defense transformation was driven by a combination of strategic necessity, political will, sustained investment, and institutional innovation. The strategic necessity arose from Turkey's experience of US and European arms embargoes during the 1974 Cyprus intervention, which left Turkey without access to critical spare parts and demonstrated the dangers of near-total dependence on a single supplier. The political will was provided by successive governments across the ideological spectrum, all of which recognized the strategic importance of indigenous defense capability regardless of their other political differences. The sustained investment was channeled through the Defence Industry Fund, which dedicated a share of military hardware purchases to financing domestic defense industry development. The institutional innovation was embodied in the Presidency of Defence Industries (SSB, formerly SSM), which provided the central direction and procurement authority needed to build coherent capability rather than scattered, uncoordinated projects.

BIDA is planning to establish defence industrial complexes in Chattogram and Narayanganj in partnership with Turkish defence firms. Bangladesh has not only acquired Turkish artillery systems and rocket systems, but also the prospect of a deeper defence cooperation. ORF Online The Turkish partnership is potentially the most important vehicle for Bangladesh's own defense industry development, because Turkey is both more willing to provide genuine technology transfer than China has been and more accessible to Bangladesh's political and economic circumstances than Western defense industry partners.

5.2 Baykar and the Drone Revolution: What Bangladesh Can Learn

The story of Baykar Technology and its Bayraktar TB2 drone is one of the most remarkable defense industry success stories of the twenty-first century and deserves detailed examination for the lessons it offers Bangladesh.

Baykar is a relatively small company founded by the Bayraktar family, led by Selcuk Bayraktar, who is also the son-in-law of President Erdogan. The company developed the TB2 drone largely through indigenous engineering rather than foreign technology transfer, drawing on Turkish universities and the civilian technology ecosystem rather than on foreign defense contractors. The TB2 was initially dismissed by Western analysts as a relatively simple system without the sophistication of American or Israeli equivalents. Its operational debut in Libya in 2019, and then even more dramatically in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, where it was decisive in Azerbaijan's military victory, revealed the error of this assessment and demonstrated that relatively simple but well-integrated systems can be devastatingly effective in the right operational context.

The TB2's success reflects several principles that Bangladesh's defense industry strategy should absorb. First, that effective military capability does not require the most sophisticated available technology; it requires technology that is well-suited to the specific operational environment and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that can be effectively employed by the forces using it. Second, that the integration of civilian technology ecosystems into defense production can produce innovative results that purely military-focused development programs miss. Third, that patient, sustained development of indigenous capability, even when initial results are modest, creates the institutional and human capital foundations for later breakthroughs.

Bangladesh has already acquired Baykar drones and is pursuing deeper technology cooperation with Turkey. In June 2025, Yunus met Haluk Gorgun, Secretary of Turkiye's Defence Industries, in Dhaka to discuss the expansion of defence cooperation between the two countries. A Bangladeshi military delegation travelled to Ankara to discuss bilateral issues with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. ORF Online If this cooperation extends to genuine technology transfer and co-production arrangements rather than merely license production of existing designs, it could provide the foundation for Bangladesh's own drone industry development.

5.3 Turkey's Air Defense Development: The SIPER Program and Bangladesh

Turkey's development of indigenous air defense capabilities, culminating in the SIPER long-range surface-to-air missile system, represents the most sophisticated and strategically significant dimension of its defense industry transformation. Turkey's pursuit of indigenous air defense capability was directly motivated by its controversial 2017 acquisition of the Russian S-400 system, which led to its expulsion from the F-35 program and demonstrated the strategic risks of dependence on foreign systems in politically charged procurement categories.

A landmark defense deal with Turkey is in its final stages, an agreement that will see Dhaka acquire the SIPER long-range air defense system and potentially co-produce Turkish combat drones. For Bangladesh, this is about buying sovereignty. For Turkey, it's about projecting power. And for India, watching from next door, it's a new and unwelcome strategic headache. Asia Times

The potential SIPER acquisition by Bangladesh is the most strategically significant single procurement decision under consideration in the 2025-2026 period. Its significance exceeds its military utility. Acquiring a long-range, indigenous Turkish air defense system rather than a Chinese or Russian equivalent signals Bangladesh's determination to diversify away from its near-total dependence on Chinese arms technology, demonstrates the new government's willingness to make defense decisions on strategic rather than narrowly political grounds, and creates a genuine air defense capability that Bangladesh has never previously possessed.

The diplomatic implications of the SIPER acquisition are equally significant. The Indian military establishment is not worried about its superiority being challenged, but the comfortable strategic calculus is being disrupted. A Bangladeshi military equipped with a credible air defense system and modern strike drones is simply a different animal. Any contingency planning, however remote, must be rewritten. The cost of intervention, and even coercion, goes up. Asia Times

This shift in India's calculation is precisely the deterrence dynamic that Bangladesh's defense modernization is designed to produce. It does not require Bangladesh to match India's military

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

power; it merely requires Bangladesh to raise the cost of Indian military options to a level that makes them strategically imprudent.

CHAPTER SIX: ISRAEL - THE SMALL STATE DEFENSE MODEL AND ITS SPECIFIC LESSONS

6.1 Israel's Strategic Concept: The Pillars of Small State Defense

Israel's defense strategy, developed over more than seven decades of conflict and tension, represents the most extensively documented and analytically rich case of a small state developing comprehensive defense capability in a hostile neighborhood. While Israel's specific circumstances, including its unique relationship with the United States, its nuclear weapons program, and the specific character of the threats it faces, differ substantially from Bangladesh's, several elements of its strategic concept are directly applicable.

Israel's defense concept rests on three foundational pillars: deterrence, early warning, and decisive victory. Deterrence means convincing potential adversaries that the cost of attacking Israel exceeds any potential benefit. Early warning means developing the intelligence and surveillance capabilities to detect threats in time to respond before they materialize into operational attacks. Decisive victory means maintaining the military capability to rapidly and conclusively defeat any adversary that cannot be deterred, before international pressure forces a ceasefire, on the adversary's territory rather than Israel's own.

Each of these pillars has direct relevance to Bangladesh's defense planning. Deterrence, as argued in Part One, is Bangladesh's primary military objective given its power asymmetry relative to its larger neighbors. Early warning is essential for a state that cannot sustain prolonged military engagement and must therefore detect and respond to threats early. Decisive victory, adapted to Bangladesh's circumstances, means the capacity to rapidly defeat any cross-border incursion or maritime intrusion before it becomes a fait accompli that diplomatic processes cannot reverse.

6.2 The Israeli Defense Industry: From Necessity to Global Leadership

Israel's Elbit Systems, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries), and other defense companies are among the world's most sophisticated producers of military technology, exporting billions of dollars of defense equipment annually to customers across every region except, for policy reasons, Iran and several other states. This extraordinary achievement in defense industrial development from a state of under ten million people is a function of sustained national commitment, deep human capital investment, and the forcing mechanism of genuine existential threats that created the political will for sustained defense investment.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Israeli defense industry success was not achieved through technology imports; it was built through indigenous development from a base of deep scientific and engineering education, with selective use of foreign partnerships and technology licensing in areas where indigenous development was impractical. Israel's universities, particularly the Technion (Israel Institute of Technology), have been central to this process, generating the human capital that drives innovation.

The lesson for Bangladesh from the Israeli case is not that Bangladesh should replicate Israel's defense industry development path, which is not replicable in its specifics. The lesson is about the foundational importance of human capital development: defense industry capability ultimately rests on the availability of engineers, scientists, software developers, and manufacturing specialists with the skills to design, produce, and maintain sophisticated military systems. Bangladesh's defense industry strategy must therefore include a substantial education and human capital development component that prioritizes the scientific and technical fields relevant to defense production.

6.3 Lessons from Israel's Comprehensive National Defense Doctrine

Israel's concept of national defense extends well beyond the armed forces to encompass the entire society in a comprehensive security framework. Universal military service, the citizen army tradition, creates a reserve force many times larger than the regular military that can be rapidly mobilized in emergencies. The Home Front Command manages civilian preparedness and response. Defense-related research is embedded in civilian universities and institutions. The defense industry is closely integrated with civilian technology companies.

This comprehensive approach to national defense reflects the Israeli strategic judgment that a state too small to build an adequate professional military through regular forces alone must mobilize its entire society as a defense resource. Bangladesh faces an analogous challenge: its professional armed forces, while growing under Forces Goal 2030, are relatively small relative to the potential threats it faces. A comprehensive national defense doctrine that mobilizes the broader society, including through reserve forces, civil defense preparations, and the integration of civilian institutions into the defense effort, would substantially augment Bangladesh's actual defense capability beyond what professional military numbers alone suggest.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SINGAPORE - THE SMALL STATE DEFENSE EXCELLENCE MODEL

7.1 Singapore's "Poisonous Shrimp" Strategy

Singapore, with a population of approximately six million and a territory of only about 733 square kilometers, has developed one of the most sophisticated and well-funded defense establishments in Southeast Asia through a deliberate strategy of deterrence by excellence rather than deterrence by mass. Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew famously articulated the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

aspiration that Singapore should be like a "poisonous shrimp," too costly to attack despite its small size.

Singapore's defense strategy combines several elements in an integrated and mutually reinforcing way. Its armed forces are small in absolute numbers but are equipped with first-class weapons systems, intensively trained, and supported by sophisticated logistics and command and control infrastructure. Singapore operates the F-15SG and F-16 fighter aircraft at a level of proficiency comparable to leading air forces; its navy includes modern frigates and submarines; and its army is equipped with advanced armor and artillery. The Singapore Armed Forces also invest heavily in cyber capabilities and information warfare, recognizing that asymmetric strengths in these domains can substitute for quantitative disadvantage in conventional forces.

Singapore's approach has been significantly enabled by its extraordinary financial resources relative to its population size, which has allowed per-capita defense spending far in excess of what Bangladesh can achieve. But the strategic logic of defense by excellence, focusing limited resources on the highest-capability systems and the most intensive training rather than spreading resources across a large but less capable force, is directly applicable to Bangladesh regardless of the specific spending levels involved.

7.2 Civil-Military Integration in Singapore

Singapore's civil-military integration is one of the most sophisticated in the world. The Singapore Armed Forces Reservist system creates a large, well-trained reserve force from the general population. The defense technology ecosystem, centered on the Defence Science and Technology Agency and closely integrated with civilian technology firms, drives continuous technological innovation. And the Singapore Army's close relationship with the civilian education system, including service member scholarships and the integration of defense-relevant training into the educational curriculum, ensures that the human capital pipeline for the defense establishment is maintained.

For Bangladesh, the Singapore model of civil-military integration offers specific lessons for the development of a reserve force system, a defense technology agency, and an education-defense linkage strategy. None of these elements requires Singapore's financial resources; each requires political will, institutional design, and sustained commitment that is not beyond Bangladesh's capacity.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINLAND - THE EXISTENTIAL DETERRENCE MODEL

8.1 Finland's Cold War Strategy and Its Post-2022 Evolution

Finland's defense strategy during the Cold War, when it shared a 1,340-kilometer border with the Soviet Union while maintaining formal neutrality, represents one of the most sophisticated

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

examples of small state deterrence management in the twentieth century. Finland's approach, sometimes called "Finlandization" in its pejorative usage but more accurately described as comprehensive national defense with political flexibility, combined massive military investment (Finland maintained one of the highest reserve-to-active ratios in the world), comprehensive civil defense preparations, and careful management of its relationship with Moscow to avoid provocation while maintaining the capability to impose unacceptable costs on any Soviet invasion.

The geopolitical transformation of 2022, when Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine ended Finnish neutrality and led to Finland's NATO membership in 2023, fundamentally altered Finland's strategic context. But the principles of comprehensive national defense that Finland developed during the Cold War period remain relevant as models for states that must deter much larger neighbors without alliance guarantees.

The Finnish "total defence" concept integrates the armed forces, border guard, police, civil emergency services, economic sector, and civil society into a comprehensive security framework in which every institution and much of the population has a defined role in national defense. This approach reflects the judgment, highly relevant to Bangladesh, that the defense of the state is not solely the responsibility of the armed forces but is a comprehensive national endeavor that mobilizes all available resources.

8.2 Finland's Territorial Defense and Reserve System

Finland's military maintains approximately 280,000 trained reserve personnel who can be mobilized within 72 hours, from a total population of approximately 5.5 million. This extraordinary reserve ratio reflects universal military service and the systematic training and equipping of reserves at a level comparable to active duty forces. Finland's reserve system is not a second-rate force of minimally trained civilians; it is a genuine military capability maintained in ready reserve through regular refresher training and excellent equipment.

For Bangladesh, with a population of approximately 170 million, the potential of a well-designed reserve force system is enormous. A reserve force system modeled on Finnish principles, with serious training, adequate equipment, and systematic refresher exercises, could multiply Bangladesh's effective military manpower several times over without a corresponding increase in the defense budget for active duty personnel. The annual cost of maintaining a trained and equipped reserve is substantially lower than the cost of equivalent active duty forces because reserves draw regular salaries only during training periods and emergency mobilizations.

CHAPTER NINE: THE BAY OF BENGAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT - A DEEPER ANALYSIS

9.1 The Bay of Bengal as a New Strategic Locus

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bay of Bengal has emerged in the 2020s as arguably the most strategically significant body of water in the Indo-Pacific after the South China Sea. This elevation of strategic importance reflects several converging developments that Bangladesh must understand in detail.

The first development is the growth of Indian naval power and ambition. India's maritime strategy, reflected in its Maritime Security Strategy 2015 and subsequent doctrine documents, explicitly identifies the Indian Ocean as India's strategic sphere of primary interest. India has invested heavily in naval modernization, including the commissioning of the INS Vikrant aircraft carrier in 2022, the development of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, and the expansion of its surface and submarine fleets. India's naval ambitions in the Bay of Bengal are not limited to defense; India seeks to project power across the Bay to shape the strategic behavior of littoral states, including Bangladesh.

The second development is the growth of Chinese naval presence and infrastructure in the Bay of Bengal region. China's Belt and Road Initiative investments in port infrastructure at Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Kyaukphyu (Myanmar), and Chittagong (Bangladesh) have created what Indian analysts have called a "string of pearls" of Chinese-linked port facilities that could in extremis support Chinese naval operations across the Indian Ocean. China's submarine deployments in the Indian Ocean have grown substantially since 2010, and its base at Djibouti on the Horn of Africa provides a foothold for sustained Chinese naval presence that was unimaginable a decade ago.

The third development is the emergence of hydrocarbon resources in the Bay of Bengal as an economic and strategic prize. Several significant natural gas and potentially oil deposits have been identified in various parts of the Bay, creating economic incentives for competing claims and raising the stakes of maritime boundary disputes. Bangladesh's own EEZ contains hydrocarbon resources of significant but as yet incompletely assessed value.

The fourth development is the growing strategic interest of external powers, particularly the United States and Japan, in the Bay of Bengal as a component of the broader Indo-Pacific strategic competition with China. Japan is intent on strengthening military export links with Bangladesh as part of its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) plan. ORF Online American engagement with Bangladesh, including the Tiger Shark exercises and the growing security cooperation dialogue, reflects Washington's interest in maintaining Bangladeshi strategic neutrality and preventing Bangladesh from drifting too closely into Chinese dependence.

9.2 Bangladesh's Maritime Strategy: Current Posture and Future Requirements

Bangladesh's current maritime strategy, as reflected in the naval components of Forces Goal 2030, is primarily defensive and focused on EEZ protection, maritime domain awareness, and deterrence of hostile naval intrusions. The acquisition of submarines, frigates, and corvettes represents a significant advancement of Bangladesh's maritime capability, but the overall naval posture remains reactive rather than proactive.

A more sophisticated maritime strategy would recognize that Bangladesh's geographic position at the head of the Bay of Bengal gives it genuine strategic leverage that its raw military power does not. The waters off Bangladesh's coast are important for regional trade, for Indian naval

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

operations, and for Chinese maritime connectivity. A Bangladesh that controls the gateway to the Bay of Bengal's northern reaches, backed by credible naval capability, occupies a strategic position of genuine importance.

The full articulation of Bangladesh's maritime strategy requires resolution of several key questions. What is the primary mission of Bangladesh's naval forces: EEZ protection, maritime trade route protection, support to ground forces in coastal operations, deterrence of naval intrusions, or some combination of these? What level of submarine capability is necessary and affordable for Bangladesh's deterrence requirements? How should Bangladesh develop its maritime patrol capability to provide comprehensive domain awareness across its EEZ? What is the relationship between the Bangladesh Navy, the Bangladesh Coast Guard, and civilian maritime agencies in the overall maritime security architecture?

These questions require detailed answers that this textbook will develop in subsequent parts dedicated specifically to the maritime domain. But the comparative framework established in this part provides the analytical tools for approaching them systematically.

9.3 The Submarine Question: Strategic Logic and Practical Constraints

Bangladesh's possession of submarines, acquired from China under Forces Goal 2030, represents the most significant single step in the country's maritime deterrence development. The submarine's fundamental strategic value is its capacity to operate covertly, to threaten surface ships and other submarines without revealing its location, and thereby to impose a permanent uncertainty on potential adversaries about the risks they face from the underwater dimension.

The Ming-class submarines acquired by Bangladesh are acknowledged to be older designs by international standards, commissioned originally in the 1980s and early 1990s in China before transfer to Bangladesh. Their operational utility is limited by their age, their noise levels relative to modern submarines, and the challenges of maintaining submarine technology in a navy with limited experience in submarine operations. However, even older submarines impose meaningful deterrence costs: a potential adversary cannot simply ignore the possibility of submarine attack when planning naval operations in Bangladesh's waters, regardless of the specific capability level of the submarines in question.

The question of Bangladesh's submarine modernization and expansion is one of the most significant and contested in its current defense planning. Japan has offered the Soryu-class submarine, which features air-independent propulsion (AIP) technology that substantially extends submerged endurance compared to conventional diesel-electric designs. The Soryu would represent a massive capability upgrade over the Chinese Ming-class submarines, but at a price that may challenge Bangladesh's defense budget.

The strategic logic of submarine expansion is sound from a deterrence perspective: more capable submarines create greater uncertainty for potential adversaries and impose higher costs on naval operations in Bangladesh's vicinity. But the budget reality is constraining. Submarines are among the most expensive major weapons systems to acquire and to operate, requiring specialized personnel, extensive maintenance infrastructure, and dedicated shore support facilities.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's submarine base at Pekua represents a substantial investment in this infrastructure, but the ongoing operational costs must be sustained over decades.

CHAPTER TEN: GLOBAL STRATEGIC DYNAMICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON BANGLADESH

10.1 The US-China Competition and South Asian Consequences

The defining strategic dynamic of the 2020s is the intensifying competition between the United States and China across multiple domains: economic, technological, diplomatic, and military. This competition, often described as a new Cold War though structurally distinct from the US-Soviet confrontation in important ways, is reshaping the strategic environment of every region of the world, including South Asia and the Bay of Bengal.

For Bangladesh, the US-China competition creates both opportunities and risks. The opportunity lies in Bangladesh's value to both great powers: both the United States and China have strategic reasons to want Bangladesh as a partner or at least as a benevolent neutral, and this mutual desire creates leverage for Dhaka to extract economic and military benefits from both without fully committing to either. The risk lies in the possibility that the competition intensifies to the point where remaining genuinely non-aligned becomes politically impossible, or that the competition generates direct military conflict that engulfs Bangladesh regardless of its preferences.

The zero-sum logic driving great-power rivalry contrasts sharply with the pragmatic, interests-based approach favored by many middle powers and small states. The old binaries of a US-centered liberal order versus a Chinese-led alternative are giving way to a more dynamic regional system. War on the Rocks Bangladesh's strategic interest lies in maintaining and deepening this trend toward strategic pluralism, which maximizes the space for non-aligned states to pursue their own interests rather than being forced into alignment with one bloc or the other.

The Trump administration's return to power in January 2025 has introduced a new dimension of uncertainty into the US-China competition and into US engagement with South Asian partners. The National Security Strategy 2025 reflects a more coherent strategic vision than its Trump 1.0 counterpart. Its animating philosophy is unambiguous: National resources exist to serve America and American interests alone. The Diplomat This explicit transactionalism in US foreign policy creates challenges for states like Bangladesh that have relied on the normative consistency of US commitment to democratic governance and human rights as a counterweight to Chinese economic and military influence. A US that defines its strategic interests in purely transactional terms is a less reliable partner for Bangladesh's democratic values even as it may remain a useful partner for specific security interests.

10.2 China's 2025 Defense White Paper and Its Implications for Bangladesh

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

China's release of a new Defense White Paper in May 2025 provides important official insight into Beijing's strategic priorities and their implications for neighboring states including Bangladesh.

China's 2025 defence white paper presents Beijing's ambitions for a "new era", positioning itself as the source of peace and development in the Asia Pacific while rejecting the Indo-Pacific framework promoted by the United States. The paper highlights China's core interests, from Taiwan to the South China Sea, and signals a willingness to defend them by force. East Asia Forum

For Bangladesh, several aspects of China's 2025 White Paper are particularly significant. The paper's articulation of Chinese interests extends across the entire Indo-Pacific, including the Indian Ocean region where Bangladesh is located. China's explicit framing of the "Indo-Pacific" concept as a threat to its interests, because it is an US-driven framework for containing Chinese influence, places Bangladesh in a structurally difficult position: if Bangladesh participates in Indo-Pacific security frameworks, it risks Chinese displeasure; if it refuses, it may be excluded from security arrangements that serve its interests.

Nations directly affected by China's expansive maritime claims exhibit varying threat perceptions, resulting in common yet differentiated responses. Vietnam is expected to strengthen security cooperation with extra-regional powers while reassuring Beijing that such actions are not aimed against China. East Asia Forum This Vietnam strategy, engaging extra-regional powers while reassuring China, is precisely the strategy that Bangladesh has been attempting to implement, and it validates the general direction of Bangladesh's approach.

10.3 The Russia-Ukraine War and Global Defense Industry Implications

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the subsequent two-plus years of high-intensity conventional warfare have had profound and far-reaching implications for global defense policy and the defense industry that are highly relevant to Bangladesh's own procurement planning.

The Ukraine war has demonstrated, first, that conventional warfare between roughly comparable military forces at industrial scale remains possible and devastating even in the twenty-first century. The massive consumption of ammunition, the loss of thousands of armored vehicles, and the central importance of artillery and drone warfare have forced a reassessment of inventory levels, production capacity, and force structure across virtually all military establishments.

Second, the Ukraine war has exposed the limitations of Chinese and Russian military equipment in high-intensity conventional conflict, at least relative to Western standards. Ukrainian forces equipped with Western systems have generally outperformed Russian forces equipped with Russian systems in engagements where the quantitative balance has been roughly comparable. This finding has specific implications for Bangladesh, which has acquired primarily Chinese military equipment under Forces Goal 2030. The operational performance of Chinese equipment in actual high-intensity conflict remains an open question, and the Ukraine experience suggests that maintaining some diversity of equipment source is strategically prudent.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Third, the Ukraine war has demonstrated the critical importance of indigenous defense production capacity. Ukraine's ability to sustain the fight has depended heavily on Western arms transfers, but it has also benefited enormously from its own surviving defense industry, which has adapted and innovated to produce weapons suited to the specific conditions of the conflict. Bangladesh's defense industry development gains additional urgency from this lesson: the state that cannot produce at least some of its own weapons is strategically dependent in ways that could prove fatal in a sustained conflict.

Fourth, the Ukraine war has revealed the decisive importance of drone warfare in contemporary conflict. A cornerstone acquisition is the October 2025 approval for 20 Chengdu J-10CE multirole fighter jets from China. Turkey has emerged as an important supplier of drone systems. Grokipedia Bangladesh's acquisition of Turkish drones and its pursuit of drone production capacity reflects an appropriate response to the Ukraine lesson about the operational significance of unmanned systems.

10.4 The India-Pakistan Nuclear Dimension and Bangladesh

Bangladesh's security environment includes the uncomfortable reality that two of its neighbors, India and Pakistan, are nuclear-armed states with a history of multiple wars and ongoing deep hostility. The nuclear dimension of the South Asian strategic environment creates risks for Bangladesh even though it is not a direct party to the India-Pakistan nuclear competition.

The risk of nuclear use in a future India-Pakistan conflict, while analysts generally assess it as low in absolute terms, is not negligible. The 1999 Kargil conflict brought the two nuclear states closer to potential nuclear confrontation than any previous crisis, and the 2019 Balakot air strikes demonstrated that the two countries can conduct conventional military operations against each other's territory without immediate escalation to nuclear use, which may paradoxically lower the threshold for future conventional confrontations.

For Bangladesh, a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would be catastrophic regardless of its geographic targeting, because the nuclear winter effects, the radioactive fallout, the massive refugee flows, and the economic collapse of the two nuclear states would devastate the entire South Asian region including Bangladesh. This is not a scenario that Bangladesh's defense policy can prevent, but it is a scenario that Bangladesh's foreign policy must work continuously to reduce the probability of, through support for India-Pakistan confidence-building measures, nuclear risk reduction initiatives, and the institutional frameworks of arms control.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: BANGLADESH'S RECENT DEFENSE TRAJECTORY - A DETAILED 2024-2026 ASSESSMENT

11.1 The July Revolution and Its Immediate Defense Policy Consequences

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The July 2024 revolution that removed Sheikh Hasina from power created an immediate and multifaceted challenge for Bangladesh's defense establishment. The military's decision not to suppress the uprising, reversing a historical pattern in which the armed forces had been the ultimate guarantor of governmental continuity, was itself a significant act with profound institutional implications.

The military's calculation in 2024 appeared to reflect several considerations. The scale of the popular uprising was such that suppression would have required massive and deadly force, potentially resulting in casualties comparable to those of 1971 and destroying whatever remained of the armed forces' political legitimacy. Sheikh Hasina's own decision to flee rather than call on the military to defend her removed the immediate political command authority that would normally authorize military intervention. And the military's institutional interests, including its extensive business empire and its relationships with international partners, would have been severely damaged by association with a violent suppression that the international community and Bangladesh's own population would have condemned.

Whatever the specific calculations, the outcome was a political transition achieved without the military coup that had characterized every previous major political change in Bangladesh's history. This represents a potentially significant evolution in Bangladesh's civil-military relations, though its durability depends on the institutional reforms and democratic consolidation that follow the transition.

The new interim government of Muhammad Yunus has initiated plans to reform key sectors and institutions of the country, including the police, judiciary, and constitution. Every major step taken during the previous administration is now subject to change. The Diplomat

11.2 The Diversification Drive: A Detailed Assessment of 2024-2026 Partnerships

The Yunus interim government has moved aggressively to diversify Bangladesh's defense partnerships beyond the heavy Chinese dependence of the Hasina years. Throughout 2025 and into early 2026, Dhaka engaged with partners from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Pakistan, Turkiye and other Western nations to secure advanced military hardware, ranging from combat aircraft and missile systems to warships, submarines and unmanned platforms. Bdmilitary

The most significant individual developments of this period include:

The Eurofighter Letter of Intent. On 9 December 2025, the Bangladesh Air Force signed a Letter of Intent with Leonardo S.p.A of Italy to procure Eurofighter Typhoon. According to the Air Force, the agreement covers the eventual supply of Eurofighter Typhoon jets, which are expected to join BAF's frontline fleet as part of its next-generation multi-role combat capabilities. Wikipedia The Eurofighter is one of the world's most capable combat aircraft, representing a qualitative leap from Bangladesh's current fighter inventory that would fundamentally transform the Bangladesh Air Force's combat potential. The Letter of Intent is not a binding contract and leaves significant details including final price, number of aircraft, weapons package, and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

technology transfer provisions to be negotiated. But its signing represents a political commitment at the highest level to Western defense technology integration.

The Japan Defense Equipment Transfer Agreement. On 3 February 2026, Bangladesh and Japan signed a formal agreement to facilitate the transfer of defence equipment and technology. The deal was signed in Dhaka by Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division of Bangladesh, and Saida Shinichi, the Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh. This agreement establishes a legal framework that governs the handling and transfer of military equipment between the two nations. Wikipedia Japan's emergence as a defense partner represents a genuinely new dimension of Bangladesh's security relationships, reflecting Japan's own evolving defense posture under its revised National Security Strategy.

The Pakistan Defense Engagement. For the first time since the birth of Bangladesh, several defence exchanges have taken place with Pakistan. Both sides discussed regional security dynamics, the scope for joint military exercises, training programmes, and defence trade. A military delegation led by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General, Major General Shahid Amir Afsar, met their Bangladeshi counterparts in February 2025, marking the first high-level engagement between the ISI and Bangladeshi officials for military and intelligence cooperation. ORF Online

The Bangladesh-Pakistan defense engagement is the most politically sensitive element of the 2024-2026 defense diversification, given the historical trauma of the Liberation War and the deep suspicion of Pakistan that remains a powerful force in Bangladesh's political culture. The engagement has been criticized by Liberation War veterans' organizations and by those who see any normalization of Bangladesh-Pakistan relations as a betrayal of the founding principles of the republic. From a purely strategic standpoint, however, Pakistan offers aircraft (the JF-17 Thunder), military training, and intelligence cooperation that could be of genuine value to Bangladesh's defense modernization, and the engagement is consistent with the broader principle of non-alignment and strategic diversification.

The US Tiger Shark Exercise and Growing Security Cooperation. A contingent of 120 military personnel from the United States arrived in Chattogram, Bangladesh, on 10 September 2025. In August 2025, the US and Bangladesh concluded a bilateral military exercise, Tiger Shark, which enhanced regional security cooperation, interoperability, and built mutual capacity between the armed forces of both nations. ORF Online Growing US engagement with Bangladesh reflects Washington's strategic interest in Bangladesh as a counterweight to Chinese influence in the Bay of Bengal region, and provides Bangladesh with training, doctrine, and interoperability benefits that Chinese arms transfers have not provided.

11.3 The J-10CE Decision: Continuity Within Diversification

The October 2025 approval for the acquisition of twenty Chengdu J-10CE multirole fighter jets from China, valued at approximately $2.2 billion, illustrates the complexity and internal tensions of Bangladesh's diversification strategy. Even as Dhaka pursues the Eurofighter from Italy and new defense relationships with Japan, Turkey, and the United States, China remains the primary source of major military systems.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The J-10CE deal underscores sustained Sino-Bangladeshi defense ties, with Beijing supplying over 70% of Dhaka's major hardware since 2010, though critics note limited offsets for local production. Grokipedia

The J-10CE decision reflects several realities. China remains willing and able to provide major military systems at prices and on financing terms that Western suppliers cannot match. The J-10CE is a genuine 4.5-generation multirole fighter with capabilities substantially superior to Bangladesh's current aircraft inventory, and it can be operated alongside the existing Chinese weapons systems in Bangladesh's inventory. The technology transfer provisions, whatever their limitations, are more substantial than purely commercial sales. And the relationship with China is simply too important, both economically and strategically, to be abandoned in favor of a policy of pure diversification.

The parallel pursuit of both Chinese J-10CEs and a potential Eurofighter acquisition reflects a sophisticated two-track approach: using Chinese systems for immediate capability requirements where China's pricing and financing advantages are decisive, while developing relationships with Western and other suppliers for long-term capability development and strategic hedging. This approach has risks, particularly the risk of operational complexity from maintaining systems of fundamentally different design philosophies, but it reflects a rational response to the constraints Bangladesh faces.

11.4 The Budget Crisis: Modernization Ambitions Versus Fiscal Reality

The core defence budget has been reduced for the first time in years, signalling a policy shift driven by fiscal constraints and political uncertainty. The Ministry of Defence has been allocated Tk 40,698 crore in the upcoming fiscal year, reflecting a decrease of Tk 1,316 crore compared to the previous year's proposed budget. This reduction contradicts widespread expectations among security analysts and armed forces planners who had anticipated an increase to at least Tk 55,000 crore. Bdmilitary

This budget reduction is the most significant constraint on Bangladesh's defense modernization in the 2025-2026 period. The gap between the resources available and the resources required for the ambitious modernization agenda is enormous: the proposed $75 billion 2026-2040 modernization program requires defense spending of roughly $5 billion per year averaged across the program period, while the current defense budget at current exchange rates is approximately $3.7 billion for all purposes including salaries, operations, and maintenance. The math simply does not add up without either a substantial increase in the defense budget or a dramatic reduction in modernization ambitions.

The resolution of this budget-ambition gap is one of the central challenges of Bangladesh's defense policy for the coming decade. Several partial resolutions are available. Defense industry development that replaces imported equipment with domestically produced alternatives can reduce the foreign exchange component of the defense budget. Concessional financing from China and other suppliers can defer the immediate cash cost of major acquisitions. Phased procurement that spreads costs across multiple years can make individually large acquisitions more manageable in any single budget year. And ultimately, economic growth will increase the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

tax base from which defense budgets are funded, making sustainable increases possible over time.

But none of these partial resolutions eliminates the fundamental tension between the strategic requirements and the resource constraints. Bangladesh must make hard choices about defense priorities that a serious, necessity-based defense policy framework should make systematically rather than through ad hoc political decisions.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE INDIGENOUS DEFENSE INDUSTRY - A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

12.1 Current State Assessment

Bangladesh's indigenous defense industrial base, while limited in scope, has developed significantly over the past two decades and provides a foundation upon which more ambitious development can be built. The primary institutions are the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories (BOF), the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF), and the state-owned shipbuilding industry.

The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, located at Gazipur, produce small arms ammunition, artillery shells, small arms (including the BD-08 assault rifle and BD-15 light machine gun), grenades, and other basic military ordnance. A 10-year BOF expansion blueprint from 2025 to 2035 further aims to diversify into advanced munitions, reducing import dependency. Grokipedia The expansion into advanced munitions, including guided munitions and more sophisticated artillery shells, would substantially increase the strategic value of the BOF's contribution to Bangladesh's defense self-sufficiency.

The Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory at Gazipur has developed capabilities in the production of military vehicles, engineering equipment, and mechanical components. Its recent initiatives include the assembly of armored vehicles in collaboration with foreign partners, which represents the beginning of a more sophisticated manufacturing capability. BMTF's facilities support precision engineering for components used in military vehicles and equipment, with recent initiatives to assemble tanks and armored combat vehicles in collaboration with foreign partners. This includes infrastructure for welding and complex fabrication, positioning BMTF as a hub for technology integration under indigenous development goals. Grokipedia

The Bangladesh shipbuilding industry, centered on the Khulna Shipyard and several private yards, has developed the capacity to produce patrol vessels, small landing craft, and other relatively simple naval vessels. The Khulna Shipyard has produced patrol craft for the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard, demonstrating the viability of indigenous naval vessel production at the smaller end of the capability spectrum.

12.2 The Defense Economic Zone Proposal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

One of the most strategically significant initiatives in Bangladesh's recent defense industrial planning is the proposal to establish a dedicated Defense Economic Zone (DEZ). Bangladesh proposed a Defense Economic Zone of approximately Tk 15,000 crore that aims for self-reliance and eventual export. Defencejournalbd

The DEZ concept, modeled in part on similar initiatives in Turkey (the Defense Industrial Zone in Ankara) and Malaysia, would concentrate defense industrial activity in a dedicated zone with specialized infrastructure, streamlined regulatory processes, and focused incentives for domestic and foreign defense companies. The DEZ would serve as the institutional home for technology transfer programs, joint ventures with foreign defense companies, and the development of supply chains for defense manufacturing.

BIDA is planning to establish defence industrial complexes in Chattogram and Narayanganj in partnership with Turkish defence firms. ORF Online The choice of Chattogram and Narayanganj as locations for defense industrial development reflects both economic logic (both are existing industrial centers with established infrastructure and skilled labor) and geographic logic (Chattogram's proximity to the maritime frontier makes it particularly appropriate for naval industry development).

The DEZ proposal, if implemented with adequate resources and sustained political commitment, could become the institutional vehicle for the kind of defense industry transformation that the Turkish and Korean cases demonstrate is possible over multi-decade timeframes. But it requires more than physical infrastructure: it requires a comprehensive strategy for technology acquisition, human capital development, domestic procurement preferences, and export market development that the DEZ concept alone does not encompass.

12.3 Technology Transfer: The Critical Variable

The effectiveness of Bangladesh's defense industrial development strategy depends critically on the nature and quality of technology transfer it can extract from its arms procurement relationships. There is an enormous difference between nominal technology transfer, in which a foreign supplier provides some documentation and limited training but retains control of core intellectual property and manufacturing processes, and genuine technology transfer, in which the recipient state develops real capability to manufacture, maintain, and eventually improve the systems it has acquired.

Bangladesh's experience with Chinese technology transfer has been mixed. China has been willing to provide assembly and component manufacturing opportunities, but has been generally reluctant to transfer the most sensitive and militarily significant technologies. This is a common pattern in Chinese arms exports: China transfers enough to create dependence and political goodwill, but not enough to create genuine competition with Chinese defense products.

The Turkish relationship offers different possibilities. Turkey has demonstrated, in its own defense industry development, that genuine technology transfer can occur when the recipient government is determined to extract real capability rather than the appearance of capability. Turkey's deals with Bangladesh explicitly include co-production and technology transfer

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

provisions, and Turkey's own defense industry companies have commercial incentives to establish manufacturing partnerships that will generate long-term revenue from components and support contracts.

The evaluation of specific technology transfer provisions in arms procurement contracts is one of the most technically demanding aspects of defense procurement governance, and it requires specialized expertise that Bangladesh's Ministry of Defence and DGDP must develop. A technology transfer evaluation framework, developed in consultation with defense industry experts and academic specialists in international technology governance, should be embedded in Bangladesh's procurement regulations.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS - DEEPER ANALYSIS AND REFORM PATHWAYS

13.1 The Structural Sources of Military Influence in Bangladesh

Understanding why the Bangladesh military has historically exercised influence over political processes beyond its constitutional mandate requires an analysis of the structural sources of that influence rather than simply attributing it to individual ambition or institutional arrogance.

The Bangladesh military's political influence derives from several structural sources. First, it is the most organizationally coherent institution in a political system characterized by weak parties, fragmented civil society, and limited institutional development. When civilian political institutions fail to perform their functions, the military's organizational coherence makes it the default stabilizer, not through malice but through structural necessity.

Second, the military controls a significant economic empire through the Army Welfare Trust, the Sena Kalyan Sangstha (Army welfare organization), and numerous military-owned enterprises spanning real estate, banking, manufacturing, and services. This economic empire gives the military financial independence from the defense budget that civilian oversight mechanisms do not reach, and it creates institutional interests in maintaining political influence that are not reducible to professional military considerations.

Third, the military's monopoly on significant means of coercive force gives it the ultimate political trump card in any civilian-military confrontation. Even when the military has no desire to exercise that trump card, its existence shapes the calculations of civilian politicians in ways that constrain their actions and ensure the military's institutional interests are taken into account.

13.2 Reform Pathways: International Models and Bangladesh Applicability

The international literature on civil-military relations reform identifies several pathways through which states have successfully established durable civilian supremacy over the armed forces.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

These pathways are not mutually exclusive; most successful reform processes have combined several of them simultaneously.

The democratic institution-building pathway holds that durable civilian control ultimately depends on the strength of civilian political institutions, including parliament, political parties, the judiciary, and civil society, rather than on any specific institutional mechanism for controlling the military. When civilian institutions are strong, coherent, and broadly legitimate, they can sustain civilian control even without elaborate formal oversight mechanisms. When they are weak, formal oversight mechanisms alone cannot prevent military influence.

The institutional separation pathway holds that reducing military involvement in civilian affairs requires building civilian alternatives to the functions that the military currently performs. If the military provides disaster relief because civilian emergency services are inadequate, building adequate civilian emergency services reduces the military's indispensability. If military intelligence fills gaps left by inadequate civilian intelligence services, building capable civilian intelligence agencies reduces the military's monopoly on security information.

The professionalization pathway holds that a professional military culture that is genuinely committed to civilian control as a professional value, rather than merely as a political imposition, is the most reliable foundation for durable civil-military relations. The German Bundeswehr concept of Innere Führung (leadership and civic education), which embeds commitment to democratic values and civilian control as core professional military values, represents perhaps the most systematic implementation of this approach.

The economic separation pathway holds that breaking the military's economic empire is essential for establishing genuine civilian control. As long as the military has significant independent economic resources and interests, it will maintain the autonomy to resist civilian oversight in ways that cannot be overcome through formal institutional mechanisms alone.

For Bangladesh, a comprehensive civil-military reform strategy must address all of these pathways simultaneously. Building stronger civilian political institutions, developing civilian alternatives to military functions, professionalizing the military culture toward genuine internalization of democratic values, and addressing the military's economic empire are all necessary components of sustainable reform. None of them is sufficient alone.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: INTERNATIONAL LAW UPDATE - DEVELOPMENTS RELEVANT TO BANGLADESH

14.1 The Laws of Armed Conflict in the Twenty-First Century

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The laws of armed conflict, also known as international humanitarian law (IHL), have continued to evolve in response to new forms of warfare and new military technologies. Several recent developments are directly relevant to Bangladesh's defense policy.

The regulation of autonomous weapons systems has become one of the most contested issues in contemporary IHL. The proliferation of increasingly autonomous drones and other weapons platforms that can select and engage targets without direct human control raises fundamental questions about the application of IHL requirements including discrimination between combatants and civilians, proportionality assessment, and the requirement for meaningful human control. No binding international legal instrument yet exists to govern autonomous weapons, though numerous states including many in Europe have pressed for a prohibition on "killer robots" and the International Committee of the Red Cross has issued guidance calling for meaningful human control over all weapons systems.

For Bangladesh, which is acquiring drone systems and potentially autonomous ground systems, the developing legal framework around autonomous weapons is directly relevant. Bangladesh's defense policy should include explicit guidance on the conditions under which automated weapons systems can be authorized for use, the human control requirements that must be maintained, and Bangladesh's position in the international negotiations around autonomous weapons governance.

14.2 Cyber Operations Under International Law

The application of existing international law to cyber operations has been one of the most contested areas of international legal development in recent years. The Tallinn Manual, initially published in 2013 and revised in 2017 (Tallinn Manual 2.0), represents the most authoritative non-binding assessment of how existing international law applies to cyber operations, developed by a group of international legal experts under NATO auspices.

The Tallinn Manual's conclusions are significant for Bangladesh. It holds that states have sovereignty over their cyber infrastructure, that malicious cyber operations may constitute violations of state sovereignty, that cyber operations causing physical damage or death may constitute armed attacks triggering the right of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, and that the laws of armed conflict apply to cyber operations conducted in the context of armed conflicts. These conclusions create both rights and obligations for Bangladesh in the cyber domain.

Bangladesh's engagement with the international law of cyber operations has been limited, reflecting the early state of its cyber security capabilities. A comprehensive defense policy must include a statement of Bangladesh's legal position on key contested questions in the law of cyber operations, both to guide its own conduct and to contribute to the development of international norms in ways that serve its interests.

14.3 Climate Change and the Law of the Sea

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's extraordinary vulnerability to climate change, including sea-level rise, intensifying cyclones, and increased flood frequency, creates specific legal challenges in the context of the law of the sea. As sea levels rise, the baselines from which Bangladesh's maritime zones are measured may shift, potentially reducing the extent of its EEZ and territorial waters. The 2021 Tuvalu Declaration, in which Tuvalu asserted that its maritime zones would remain unchanged even if its land territory was submerged, represents a creative legal response to this challenge that Bangladesh's legal community should study carefully.

The broader intersection of climate change and security has generated a growing body of academic and policy literature that is directly relevant to Bangladesh. The 2021 UN Security Council debate on climate and security, though it did not produce binding decisions, reflected growing international recognition that climate change is a security multiplier that amplifies existing threats and creates new ones. For Bangladesh, which faces virtually every category of climate security risk, the development of a climate security framework that integrates climate adaptation into defense planning is an urgent necessity.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: SECOND DRAFT FRAMEWORKS - DETAILED POLICY MODELS

15.1 Draft Maritime Security Policy Framework

BANGLADESH MARITIME SECURITY POLICY FRAMEWORK (DRAFT II)

PREAMBLE: The maritime domain of Bangladesh, encompassing the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the Exclusive Economic Zone, and Bangladesh's interests in the broader Bay of Bengal, is of critical importance to national security, economic development, and regional stability. This framework establishes the principles, objectives, institutional responsibilities, and capability requirements for Bangladesh's maritime security.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

The first strategic objective is sovereign maritime domain protection. Bangladesh shall maintain the capability to detect, monitor, and respond to all activities within its territorial sea and EEZ that threaten Bangladesh's sovereign rights as recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and confirmed by the 2012 and 2014 international arbitral awards.

The second strategic objective is maritime economic security. Bangladesh shall protect the maritime resources of its EEZ, including fisheries, hydrocarbon resources, and seabed minerals, from unauthorized exploitation by foreign actors, and shall maintain the security of the maritime trade routes upon which Bangladesh's export-dependent economy relies.

The third strategic objective is maritime environmental security. Bangladesh shall take appropriate measures to protect the marine environment of its maritime zones from pollution,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

illegal dumping, and other environmental threats, and shall integrate climate change adaptation into maritime security planning.

The fourth strategic objective is regional maritime cooperation. Bangladesh shall actively participate in multilateral maritime security frameworks, including BIMSTEC maritime cooperation, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and other regional arrangements that serve Bangladesh's maritime security interests without compromising its strategic autonomy.

CAPABILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Maritime domain awareness requires a network of radar stations along the coast capable of detecting all vessel movements within the territorial sea and EEZ; airborne maritime patrol assets capable of surveillance across the entire EEZ; a vessel identification and tracking system covering Bangladesh's maritime zones; and intelligence sharing arrangements with regional partners.

Naval combat capability requires surface combatants (frigates and corvettes) capable of protecting Bangladesh's territorial sea from hostile naval intrusions and of responding to maritime emergencies; submarine forces capable of deterring hostile submarine operations in Bangladesh's vicinity; and naval aviation for maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare.

Coast guard and maritime law enforcement requires a coast guard with sufficient vessels and personnel to patrol and enforce law in the coastal zone and territorial sea; specialized units for counter-piracy, counter-smuggling, and fisheries enforcement; and legal authority and training for maritime law enforcement operations.

COMMAND AND CONTROL:

A Maritime Operations Center, jointly staffed by the Bangladesh Navy, the Bangladesh Coast Guard, and civilian maritime agencies, shall provide the central command and coordination function for maritime security operations. The Maritime Operations Center shall operate under the overall authority of the Ministry of Defence for naval operations and the Ministry of Home Affairs for coast guard and law enforcement operations, with formal coordination protocols governing joint operations.

15.2 Draft Air Defense Policy Framework

BANGLADESH AIR DEFENSE POLICY FRAMEWORK (DRAFT II)

The protection of Bangladesh's airspace from unauthorized intrusion and hostile aerial attack is a fundamental requirement of national sovereignty and a critical component of the broader defense posture. Bangladesh's air defense policy shall pursue integrated, layered protection of national airspace through the combination of radar surveillance, fighter interceptors, surface-to-air missile systems, and command and control architecture.

AIR DEFENSE STRUCTURE:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The long-range air defense layer shall consist of a surface-to-air missile system with engagement range sufficient to protect Bangladesh's airspace from ballistic missile attack, cruise missile attack, and high-altitude aerial intrusions. The potential acquisition of the Turkish SIPER system, pending successful negotiation of final terms, would provide this long-range layer. The system shall be operated by the Bangladesh Air Force Air Defence Corps with the necessary specialized training and technical support.

The medium-range air defense layer shall consist of medium-range surface-to-air missile systems capable of engaging aircraft and missiles at altitudes and ranges intermediate between the long-range system and the short-range layer. The FM-90 systems already in Bangladesh's inventory provide part of this capability; expansion and modernization of this layer is a priority.

The short-range air defense layer shall consist of man-portable air defense systems, short-range missile systems, and anti-aircraft artillery for point defense of critical installations. This layer protects specific high-value targets including government facilities, military bases, major ports, and critical infrastructure from low-altitude attack.

The interceptor aviation layer, provided by the Bangladesh Air Force's fighter squadrons, shall maintain the capability for air-to-air engagement with hostile aircraft within Bangladesh's airspace, supplementing the surface-based layers with mobile, flexible interception capability.

INTEGRATION AND COMMAND:

All elements of the air defense system shall be integrated into a single Air Defense Command and Control architecture that provides real-time situational awareness and coordinated engagement authority. The integration shall include automatic data links between radar systems, missile fire control systems, and fighter aircraft, allowing simultaneous management of multiple threats across the full extent of Bangladesh's airspace.

15.3 Draft Cyber Security Defense Framework

BANGLADESH CYBER SECURITY DEFENSE FRAMEWORK (DRAFT II)

STRATEGIC CONTEXT:

Bangladesh's digital infrastructure, including the government's digital services, the financial system, telecommunications networks, the power grid, the garment industry's supply chain management systems, and critical national databases, is increasingly vulnerable to cyber attack by state and non-state actors. The Bangladesh Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-Gov CIRT) has documented growing numbers and sophistication of cyber attacks against Bangladeshi targets.

PRINCIPLES:

The first principle is resilience by design. Bangladesh's critical digital infrastructure shall be designed from the ground up with cyber security as a core requirement rather than an

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

afterthought. Systems handling sensitive national security, financial, and personal data shall meet security standards comparable to international best practice.

The second principle is active defense. Bangladesh shall not limit its cyber security posture to passive defenses but shall maintain the capability to detect ongoing attacks, attribute them to responsible actors, disrupt attacking infrastructure, and impose costs on attackers through diplomatic, legal, economic, and in appropriate cases technical countermeasures.

The third principle is whole-of-government integration. Cyber security is not solely a military responsibility; it requires coordination across the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, the Ministry of Finance, intelligence services, and civil society. The National Cyber Security Agency shall provide the central coordination and standard-setting function.

The fourth principle is legal basis. All offensive cyber operations conducted by Bangladesh shall be authorized by appropriate legal authority, conducted in accordance with international law including the laws of armed conflict where applicable, and subject to oversight by appropriate accountability mechanisms.

INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE:

A Cyber Command under the Armed Forces Division shall be responsible for military cyber operations, both defensive and offensive. The Cyber Command shall maintain specialized technical capabilities for network defense, cyber intelligence, and authorized offensive operations. It shall operate under the operational authority of the Chief of Defence Staff and the political authority of the Minister of Defence.

A National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA), under the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, shall be responsible for the protection of civilian critical infrastructure, the development and enforcement of cyber security standards for government systems, and the coordination of incident response across government and the private sector.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE - RESOURCES, INTERESTS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

16.1 The Political Economy of Defense Procurement

Defense procurement is among the most politically charged areas of government decision-making, because it involves large sums of money, classified information, technical complexity, and national security stakes that simultaneously create enormous opportunities for corruption and enormous obstacles to accountability. Understanding the political economy of defense procurement, the ways in which political interests, bureaucratic dynamics, industrial interests,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and international relationships shape procurement outcomes, is essential for designing systems that resist capture by narrow interests.

In Bangladesh's case, the political economy of defense procurement has historically been characterized by several pathological features. Political patronage has influenced the selection of contractors and suppliers in ways that have served the interests of politically connected intermediaries rather than the national defense. Kickback arrangements have inflated the cost of major procurements and sometimes led to the selection of inferior equipment. The lack of independent technical expertise in parliament and civil society has allowed the procurement bureaucracy and the armed services to operate without meaningful external scrutiny. And the classification of most procurement information has prevented the investigative journalism and civil society monitoring that in other countries serves as a check on corruption.

The Bangladesh Ordnance Factory scandals of the 2000s, the Air Force procurement controversies that led to criminal investigations, and numerous smaller incidents of alleged corruption in defense purchases all reflect this political economy. Reform requires not merely improved regulations but fundamental changes in the incentive structures that generate corruption: adequate transparency, effective oversight, meaningful penalties, and sufficient salaries and institutional prestige for procurement officials to resist corrupt offers.

16.2 The Defense Budget Process: Transparency and Accountability

Bangladesh's defense budget process currently provides very limited information to parliament and the public about how defense funds are allocated and spent. The defense budget presentation in parliament consists primarily of aggregate figures that do not permit meaningful scrutiny of specific programs, procurement decisions, or operational expenditure patterns.

A reformed defense budget process should include several elements that are standard practice in mature democracies but absent in Bangladesh. Program-based budgeting, which allocates defense funds by specific capability or operational program rather than by input category (salaries, equipment, maintenance), allows parliament and the public to assess whether defense spending is aligned with stated strategic priorities. Multi-year capital procurement plans that disclose the full life-cycle cost of major equipment acquisitions prevent the common budget manipulation of presenting only the first-year cost of a program that ultimately costs many times more.

An annual defense performance report, presented to parliament and publicly available, should account for actual spending against the approved budget, explain significant variances, and report on the operational status and readiness of key military capabilities. This report is essential for the democratic accountability of defense spending and provides the factual foundation for the parliamentary oversight that the Constitution requires but current practice prevents.

16.3 The Military Business Empire: The Reform Imperative

Bangladesh's military-owned business empire, centered on the Army Welfare Trust, the Sena Kalyan Sangstha, and other military-affiliated commercial enterprises, is one of the most

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

problematic features of Bangladesh's civil-military relations from both a democratic governance and a military professionalism perspective.

From a democratic governance perspective, the military's economic interests create conflicts of interest that undermine civilian oversight. Military officers who benefit financially from specific procurement decisions or business relationships have personal interests in defense policy choices that are separate from, and potentially in conflict with, the national security interests they are constitutionally obligated to serve. The military's economic empire also creates political leverage that civilian government authorities must navigate carefully, knowing that their decisions affecting military businesses may provoke institutional resistance.

From a military professionalism perspective, officers who devote significant time and attention to managing commercial enterprises are less focused on their professional military responsibilities. The culture of business-oriented thinking that pervades military institutions heavily involved in commercial activities is in tension with the ethos of selfless service and operational excellence that effective military organizations require.

The reform of military business involvement is politically extremely difficult precisely because it directly threatens the institutional interests that make the military a difficult actor to challenge. It requires a carefully sequenced approach that addresses the underlying economic concerns, particularly the inadequacy of military salaries and pensions for senior officers, before eliminating the business activities that supplement them. Alternative mechanisms for military welfare funding, including better-funded pension systems and government-backed welfare programs comparable to those in civilian government services, should be developed as preconditions for reforming the business empire.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: BANGLADESH'S DIPLOMATIC ARCHITECTURE AND DEFENSE

17.1 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy Coordination

Effective defense policy requires effective coordination between the defense and foreign policy establishments. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence must work together to ensure that defense posture choices, arms procurement decisions, and military partnership agreements are consistent with Bangladesh's overall foreign policy objectives and are communicated diplomatically in ways that serve national interests.

This coordination has historically been weak in Bangladesh, with the defense and foreign policy establishments operating with limited coordination and frequent inconsistency. Defense procurement decisions have been made without adequate consideration of their foreign policy implications; diplomatic positions have been taken without adequate understanding of their defense implications. The result has been a series of costly inconsistencies, including arms

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

purchases from states with which Bangladesh has politically complex relationships and diplomatic positions that constrain Bangladesh's defense procurement options.

The institutional mechanism for better coordination is the National Security Council, which this textbook has already recommended, and which should have its own professional staff drawn from both the defense and foreign policy establishments. The NSC staff should include both military and civilian officials, with the specific mandate to identify and resolve inconsistencies between defense and foreign policy before they become public and costly.

17.2 Track 1.5 and Track 2 Diplomacy in Defense

"Track 1.5" diplomacy refers to exchanges between official government representatives and quasi-official or non-governmental actors, while "Track 2" refers to entirely non-governmental exchanges between academics, think tanks, former officials, and civil society actors. Both channels play important roles in defense diplomacy by providing spaces for exploring ideas and positions that official channels cannot accommodate.

Bangladesh has made limited use of Track 1.5 and Track 2 defense diplomacy. Its academic and research institutions focused on security studies are limited in number and resources compared to comparable states. Its think tank ecosystem, while growing, lacks the defense-specialized institutions that provide the intellectual infrastructure for Track 2 diplomacy in states with more developed security studies traditions.

Building Bangladesh's Track 2 defense diplomacy capacity is a relatively low-cost investment with potentially high returns. Supporting the development of a Bangladesh Institute for Peace and Security Studies, modeled on similar institutions in India (IDSA), Pakistan (ISSI), and Malaysia (ISIS), would provide an institutional home for independent security research, a training ground for the next generation of Bangladesh's strategic analysts, and a vehicle for Track 2 engagement with counterpart institutions in the region and beyond.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: TOWARD PART THREE - THE AGENDA FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM

18.1 Summary of Legislative Reform Requirements

The analysis in this part, building on the foundations established in Part One, has identified a comprehensive agenda for legislative reform that is essential for developing a defense policy adequate to Bangladesh's needs. These legislative requirements will be developed in full detail in Part Three, which is dedicated to the legislative architecture of Bangladesh defense policy. But summarizing them here provides a bridge to the next part and reinforces their centrality to the overall policy agenda.

The primary legislative reform requirements identified in Parts One and Two are:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

A National Defense Act that provides a comprehensive statutory framework for defense governance, replacing the colonial-era patchwork of service acts with a coherent, rights-protecting, accountability-ensuring legal architecture.

An Intelligence Oversight Act that defines the legal powers of Bangladesh's intelligence services, establishes effective oversight mechanisms including a parliamentary intelligence committee and an Inspector General of Intelligence, and creates remedies for rights violations by intelligence services.

A Defense Procurement Act that establishes transparent, competitive procurement processes for defense acquisition, with anti-corruption provisions, parliamentary oversight requirements, and audit mechanisms.

A Reserve Forces Act that provides the legal framework for a comprehensive reserve system, including training obligations, conditions of service, mobilization authority, and rights of reserve personnel.

A Cyber Security Act that establishes the legal framework for Bangladesh's cyber defense activities, including the authorities of the Cyber Command for military cyber operations and the National Cyber Security Agency for civilian infrastructure protection.

A National Security Council Act that provides statutory authority for the NSC, defines its membership and functions, and establishes its relationship with parliament and the Cabinet.

The reform and ultimate repeal of the Special Powers Act 1974, replaced with narrowly tailored preventive detention legislation consistent with constitutional rights and international human rights standards.

18.2 The Legislative Drafting Challenge

Drafting defense legislation is a technically demanding process that requires expertise in military operations and doctrine, constitutional law, international law, human rights law, administrative law, and legislative drafting techniques. Bangladesh's legal community, while containing many talented lawyers, has limited specialized expertise in defense law, which is a highly specialized field even by the standards of legal practice.

The development of this expertise requires investment in legal education that includes defense law, the creation of opportunities for Bangladesh lawyers and legal academics to engage with the growing international community of defense law scholars and practitioners, and the recruitment or secondment of defense law specialists to the relevant government departments when legislation is being developed.

International cooperation in defense law development is also valuable. The International Committee of the Red Cross, the NATO Legal Office, and various academic centers of defense law research have developed expertise and model legislative frameworks that can inform

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's legislative reform process without supplanting Bangladesh's own legal analysis and political decision-making.

CONCLUSION TO PART TWO: THE COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS AND FORWARD DIRECTION

Part Two has examined Bangladesh's defense policy challenges through the lens of comparative state practice, global strategic dynamics, and detailed analysis of the 2024-2026 period. The comparative cases, from Vietnam's strategic autonomy doctrine to South Korea's alliance management, from Indonesia's maritime strategy to Turkey's defense industry transformation, have generated a rich set of insights that complement and deepen the theoretical foundations established in Part One.

Several overarching themes emerge from the comparative and contemporary analysis.

The first is the universal importance of strategic patience. Every successful defense policy development examined in this part, from South Korea's defense industry to Turkey's air defense capability to Vietnam's comprehensive strategic partnership building, reflects decades of sustained commitment to clear strategic objectives. Bangladesh cannot solve its defense challenges in a single political term, and a defense policy that is designed for short political cycles rather than long strategic horizons will fail regardless of its intellectual merits.

The second is the indispensable role of democratic accountability. The comparative cases consistently show that defense establishments without strong democratic oversight become less effective as well as less legitimate over time. Corruption, institutional arrogance, procurement inefficiency, and strategic blindness all grow in the absence of accountability. Bangladesh's democratic consolidation and its defense modernization are not competing priorities; they are mutually reinforcing requirements.

The third is the transformative potential of genuine strategic diversification. The interim government under Nobel laureate Dr Mohammed Yunus pursued an assertive and outward-looking defence strategy. Throughout 2025 and into early 2026, Dhaka engaged with partners from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Pakistan, Turkiye and other Western nations to secure advanced military hardware, ranging from combat aircraft and missile systems to warships, submarines and unmanned platforms. Bdmilitary This diversification, if sustained and deepened beyond the procurement dimension to include doctrinal integration, training partnerships, and defense industrial cooperation, has the potential to fundamentally improve Bangladesh's strategic position by reducing its vulnerabilities and expanding its options.

The fourth is the centrality of the maritime domain. Every aspect of Bangladesh's strategic environment, from Chinese and Indian naval competition in the Bay of Bengal to the hydrocarbon resources of Bangladesh's EEZ to the trade routes upon which Bangladesh's economy depends to the security challenges posed by Myanmar's crisis, has a maritime

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

dimension. Bangladesh's defense policy must reflect this maritime centrality in its capability development, its doctrinal framework, and its diplomatic priorities.

The fifth and most fundamental is the inseparability of defense from development. Bangladesh's security is ultimately grounded in the prosperity, social cohesion, and democratic legitimacy of the Bangladeshi state and society. A Bangladesh that is economically dynamic, socially inclusive, democratically governed, and diplomatically engaged is a Bangladesh that is fundamentally more secure than one that invests exclusively in military hardware without addressing the social and political foundations of national resilience.

Part Three will turn to the detailed legislative architecture of Bangladesh's defense system, examining the specific provisions of existing laws, the constitutional framework for legislative reform, comparative legislative models, and detailed draft legislative frameworks for the priority areas identified in Parts One and Two. The legislative dimension of defense policy is often underestimated in its strategic significance, but the quality of a state's defense legal architecture ultimately determines whether its strategic aspirations can be translated into sustainable, accountable, and effective security policy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TWO

Comparative Defense Policy

Huntington, Samuel P. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Harvard University Press, 1957.

Janowitz, Morris. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. Free Press, 1960.

Feaver, Peter D. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations. Harvard University Press, 2003.

Bland, Douglas. "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations." Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1999.

Vietnam

Thayer, Carlyle A. "Vietnam's Defence Policy and Its Impact on Foreign Relations." Eurasia Border Review, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2011.

Morris, Stephen J. Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War. Stanford University Press, 1999.

South Korea

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Kim, Tongfi. The Supply Side of Security: A Market Theory of Military Alliances. Stanford Security Studies, 2016.

Snyder, Scott A. South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers. Columbia University Press, 2018.

Indonesia

Mietzner, Marcus. Military Politics, Islam and the State in Indonesia. ISEAS Press, 2009.

Sebastian, Leonard C. Realpolitik Ideology: Indonesia's Use of Military Force. ISEAS Press, 2006.

Turkey

Bialos, Jeffrey P. and Kaye, Dalia Dassa. Defense Industries in the 21st Century: A Comparative Assessment. Merrill Lynch Center for Economics, 1999.

Hale, William. Turkish Foreign Policy: 1774 to the Present. Frank Cass, 2000.

Contemporary Strategic Analysis

International Institute for Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 2025. Routledge, 2025.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. SIPRI Yearbook 2025: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Oxford University Press, 2025.

Meijer, Hugo and Wyss, Marco (eds). The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Regional Security

Brewster, David. India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership. Routledge, 2014.

Scott, David. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." Asia-Pacific Review, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2006.

Ganguly, Sumit and Thompson, William R. (eds). Asian Rivalries: Conflict, Escalation, and Limitations on Two-Level Games. Stanford University Press, 2011.

Bangladesh Specific

Ahmed, Salahuddin. Bangladesh: Past and Present. APH Publishing, 2004.

Lifschultz, Lawrence. Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution. Zed Books, 1979.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Riaz, Ali and Fair, C. Christine (eds). Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh. Routledge, 2011.

Recent Policy Documents

Bangladesh Ministry of Finance. National Budget 2025-26. Government of Bangladesh, 2025.

Army Recognition. Bangladesh Military Modernization Assessment. August 2025.

Observer Research Foundation. Deciphering Dhaka's Diversifying Defence Inventory. September 2025.

Asia Times. Turkey-Bangladesh Air Defense Deal Analysis. October 2025.

The Diplomat. Revisiting Forces Goal 2030. December 2024.

Shangri-La Dialogue Papers 2025. International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2025.

China's National Security in the New Era. State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, May 2025.

End of Part Two

Part Three will undertake a comprehensive legislative investigation into the legal architecture of Bangladesh's defense system, examining in detail the constitutional provisions, existing legislation, colonial heritage laws, and international legal obligations that govern defense policy, and developing detailed model legislative frameworks for the comprehensive reform program identified in Parts One and Two. Specific attention will be given to comparative defense legislation from Westminster-model democracies, the jurisprudential foundations of defense law reform, the specific drafting techniques applicable to defense legislation, and the political economy of legislative reform in the defense sector.

Part Three: Legislative Architecture, Security Sector Reform, Democratic Oversight, and the Jurisprudence of Defense Governance

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART THREE

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Parts One and Two of this textbook constructed the intellectual, philosophical, historical, and comparative architecture necessary for serious engagement with Bangladesh's defense policy challenges. Part One laid philosophical and jurisprudential foundations, tracing the concept of defense from antiquity through contemporary hybrid warfare theory, excavating the constitutional and legal framework, and beginning the process of drafting analytical frameworks for policy development. Part Two turned outward, examining the defense policies of Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Israel, Singapore, and Finland for comparative lessons, deepening the analysis of the Bay of Bengal strategic environment, assessing the dramatic developments in Bangladesh's defense trajectory between 2024 and 2026, and concluding with a summary of the legislative reform agenda demanding urgent attention.

Part Three now turns to the most demanding and most consequential dimension of the entire project: the legislative architecture of Bangladesh's defense governance. This is the dimension that most academic treatments of defense policy in the developing world either skip entirely or address with superficial generalizations about the need for parliamentary oversight and civilian control. This part refuses that superficiality. It goes into the actual legal texts, the specific constitutional provisions, the comparative legislative models from countries that have successfully built democratic defense governance, the jurisprudential controversies surrounding intelligence law and military justice, and the concrete legislative drafting challenges that any government attempting genuine security sector reform in Bangladesh must confront.

The timing of this part is not accidental. Bangladesh's parliamentary elections of February 2026 have opened a new chapter in the country's political history. The interim government of Muhammad Yunus oversaw a remarkable period of legislative activity in 2025, with seventy-eight ordinances promulgated across a wide range of areas as part of the ongoing reform process. The elections themselves were accompanied by a national referendum on constitutional and institutional reforms. The country is, in other words, in the middle of a moment of genuine institutional reconstruction, a moment that comes rarely and that, if not grasped with clarity and purpose, will produce partial reforms that leave the deeper structural problems intact.

The defense governance architecture is among the deepest of those structural problems. Bangladesh has never had a National Defense Act. It has never had a comprehensive intelligence oversight law. Its military justice system operates on colonial-era foundations. Its parliamentary defense committee has historically been an ornamental body without real investigative authority. Its defense procurement process lacks the transparency and competitive integrity necessary to prevent corruption. Its intelligence agencies have operated without statutory definition of their powers, limitations, or accountability mechanisms. These are not minor administrative deficiencies. They are fundamental failures of democratic governance that have enabled abuse, corruption, and the instrumentalization of security institutions for political purposes.

This part addresses all of these gaps with the depth and seriousness they deserve. It does not merely describe the problems. It analyzes the theoretical frameworks that explain why the problems persist, examines how comparable states have addressed similar challenges, investigates the specific legislative history and jurisprudential controversies involved, and provides detailed draft legislative frameworks that a serious government could use as starting points for genuine reform.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The reader will find this part the most immediately practical of the three parts produced so far. It moves from theory and history toward the workbench of actual lawmaking. It treats legislative drafting as an intellectual and political act, shaped by philosophical commitments, constrained by constitutional requirements, informed by comparative precedent, and always contested by the interests it threatens to regulate. It is, in short, an honest account of how law and power interact in the domain of national security.

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND ITS APPLICATION TO BANGLADESH

1.1 What is Security Sector Reform? The Conceptual Foundations

Security sector reform is a term that entered the vocabulary of international development policy in the late 1990s, primarily through the work of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and subsequently through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee guidelines. But the practice it describes is older than the terminology, and the theory behind it draws on intellectual traditions that stretch back through democratic theory, constitutionalism, and the philosophy of legitimate political authority.

At its core, security sector reform is the process of transforming security institutions from instruments of regime protection and elite privilege into servants of the public good, governed by law, accountable to democratic oversight, and responsive to the needs and rights of ordinary citizens. This transformation requires simultaneous change across multiple dimensions: legal and constitutional frameworks, institutional structures and procedures, human resource management and professional culture, oversight mechanisms, and the broader political environment that shapes how security institutions behave.

The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, known as DCAF, which co-organized a significant high-level dialogue on security sector reform in Dhaka in December 2025 in partnership with the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, has articulated a framework that identifies five interconnected elements of a functioning security sector. These are the security providers themselves, meaning the armed forces, police, intelligence agencies, and paramilitary forces; the management and oversight bodies, meaning the executive, legislature, judiciary, and independent oversight institutions; the non-statutory security forces, meaning armed political parties, private security companies, and liberation armies; the justice and rule of law institutions; and the civil society actors, including the media, academic institutions, and civil society organizations that provide public scrutiny and advocacy.

The importance of this multi-actor framework is that it resists the tendency to focus security sector reform exclusively on the uniformed services while ignoring the institutional environment in which they operate. Bangladesh's security sector problems are not principally problems of the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

armed forces themselves, though those problems exist and are significant. They are fundamentally problems of the political and legal environment that has allowed security institutions to be captured by political interests, to operate without legal constraint, and to face no meaningful accountability for abuses.

The theoretical foundations of security sector reform draw heavily on the concept of democratic control of the armed forces, which has both normative and functional dimensions. Normatively, democratic control follows from the basic principle that in a democratic state, government power is a trust held on behalf of the people, who are the ultimate sovereign. The armed forces and security agencies, as the most coercive instruments of state power, are therefore most urgently required to operate under democratic control. Functionally, democratic control tends to produce better security outcomes because it subjects security institutions to competitive scrutiny, disciplines corruption, forces prioritization of genuine national security needs over institutional interests, and maintains the trust between the security sector and the population that effective security provision requires.

The constructivist school of international relations, discussed in Part One of this textbook, adds an important dimension to this analysis. Security institutions are not merely technical organizations; they are social entities with cultures, identities, and collective self-understandings that shape their behavior in ways that no formal legal framework can fully capture. Security sector reform must therefore address not just laws and structures but professional cultures, socialization processes, and the narratives that security institutions tell about themselves and their role in the national life. In Bangladesh's case, the narrative of the armed forces as the guardians of national sovereignty and the saviors of political order in times of crisis, a narrative cultivated through decades of military involvement in politics, is itself a security governance problem that legislative reform alone cannot solve.

1.2 The Historical Pattern of Failure: Why Previous Reform Efforts Have Not Held

Bangladesh's security sector reform story is, until 2024, largely a story of failure. Not failure of ambition, for there have been numerous moments when serious reform proposals were advanced by credible actors, but failure of political will, institutional resistance, and the capture of reform processes by the very interests the reforms were intended to discipline.

The most fundamental recurring problem has been the relationship between civilian political parties and the security apparatus. In the competitive political environment of Bangladesh, where the stakes of political power are extraordinarily high and the mechanisms for peaceful transfer of power have been repeatedly contested, governing parties have consistently preferred to maintain informal control over security institutions rather than subject them to independent oversight. The Awami League under Sheikh Hasina perfected this approach. The armed forces, police, and intelligence agencies were not brought under independent democratic control. They were brought under party control, which is a fundamentally different and in many respects more dangerous arrangement.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This pattern reflects what scholars of civil-military relations have called the problem of "concordance," a concept advanced by Rebecca Schiff in her concordance theory of civil-military relations. Schiff argued that the traditional focus on civilian supremacy over the military misses the more fundamental question of whether a state's civil and military institutions have developed a shared cultural and normative framework that makes democratic control self-sustaining rather than externally imposed. Bangladesh has never achieved such concordance. Its civil-military relationship has oscillated between periods of overt military dominance, as during the Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad eras, and periods of informal political capture, as during the Hasina era. Neither arrangement produced genuinely democratic security governance.

The second structural problem is the weakness of Bangladesh's parliamentary institutions. As the Ministry of Defence Wikipedia article accurately notes, while the Jatiya Sangsad is constitutionally responsible for working with the President and the service chiefs on national security, members of parliament have never played a significant role in either national defense planning or defense budgeting, which instead is handled by the Defence Secretary. This is not merely a matter of institutional capacity, though that deficit is real. It reflects a deeper problem of political culture in which the security sector has been treated as the domain of the executive and the uniformed services, from which legislators and the public are deliberately excluded. Secrecy is not merely a feature of this system; it is a constitutive principle that protects entrenched interests.

The third structural problem is the absence of foundational legislation. Bangladesh has never enacted a National Security Council law, a National Defense Act, an Intelligence Oversight Act, or a comprehensive military justice code consistent with international human rights standards. The security sector operates on a hodgepodge of colonial-era legislation, service acts that were drafted without reference to constitutional rights, and the ordinary criminal law applied selectively and inconsistently. This legislative vacuum is not an accident. It serves the interests of those who benefit from the ambiguity, since undefined powers are easier to abuse than defined ones and undefined accountability is easier to evade than specific legal obligations.

The Human Rights Watch report of January 2025 titled "After the Monsoon Revolution: A Roadmap to Lasting Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh" captured this structural reality with unusual precision. It documented how over the preceding fifteen years, the security forces served as a core component of Sheikh Hasina's repressive apparatus, systematically targeting members of the opposition, critics, journalists, and human rights activists. The report noted that to avoid a repeat of past abuses, the key factors to be addressed include political interference in the police, prosecutor's office, and judiciary, as well as the need to ensure civilian oversight and accountability and to end abusive practices. The question now, in 2026, is whether the political energy generated by the July 2024 revolution and the subsequent reform process can be translated into durable institutional change.

1.3 The 2024-2026 Reform Moment: Assessment and Analysis

The period between August 2024 and February 2026 represents the most significant opportunity for genuine security sector reform that Bangladesh has faced since the transition from direct

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

military rule to parliamentary democracy in 1991. The July Revolution that toppled the Awami League government created a political vacuum that the Yunus interim government has sought to fill with an ambitious legislative and institutional reform program.

The scale of the legislative activity has been extraordinary. The promulgation of seventy-eight ordinances in 2025 across areas from criminal procedure reform to data protection law represents an intensity of legislative engagement without modern precedent in Bangladesh. Some of these ordinances, particularly the Cyber Safety Ordinance of 2025 which will be analyzed in detail in a later chapter of this part, represent genuine advances in the legal framework governing security-adjacent domains. Others have been more ambiguous in their implications.

The December 2025 conference on security sector reform, hosted by BIPSS and DCAF in Dhaka, identified the key elements of a genuine reform agenda with admirable clarity. Participants stressed the importance of parliamentary oversight, judicial review, independent commissions, and civil society engagement to prevent abuse of power and strengthen professional governance. The BIPSS President, Major General ANM Muniruzzaman (retired), identified the need for a unified strategic security framework, including a National Security Policy and a central coordination mechanism in the form of a National Security Council, to ensure consistent direction and improve inter-agency alignment.

The United Nations Human Rights office, OHCHR, released its fact-finding report in February 2025 with recommendations that were simultaneously a damning indictment of the previous regime and a demanding agenda for reform. The OHCHR recommended the disbandment of the Rapid Action Battalion, a recommendation that proved politically contentious but reflected the deep institutional corruption that the RAB had accumulated over two decades. More relevant for defense governance, the OHCHR recommended the enactment of an ordinance to be endorsed as a parliamentary act ensuring that members of the armed forces can only be assigned to internal security tasks in the most exceptional circumstances and for a limited duration, that such assignments be subjected to parliamentary approval, and that the forces act under the command of civilian law enforcement authorities with full transparency to the public regarding their tasks and rules of engagement.

These recommendations strike at the heart of one of the most fundamental and most contested aspects of Bangladesh's security governance: the role of the armed forces in internal security. This question, which is simultaneously a constitutional law question, a political philosophy question, and a practical security policy question, will be examined in depth in this chapter and throughout this part.

The national elections of February 2026 introduced a new dimension to the reform calculation. The political parties contesting those elections all felt the need to present their positions on security sector reform, since the July Revolution had made institutional reform a central public demand. The National Citizen Party, the NCP, which emerged from the student-led protest movement that brought down the Awami League, published what was perhaps the most ambitious defense and security reform manifesto of any party. The NCP manifesto proposed restructuring the DGFI through the introduction of a clear and stringent legal framework, with the stated objective of preventing intelligence agencies from being used for political purposes or

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

becoming involved in human rights abuses. The proposed framework would clearly define the scope, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms governing intelligence operations, with regular parliamentary review and oversight to ensure transparency and democratic governance.

The NCP manifesto also proposed creating a reserve force twice the size of the country's conventional armed forces, roughly 600,000 personnel, arguing that a larger and well-trained reserve component would enhance national resilience and provide strategic depth during emergencies, natural disasters, or conflict scenarios. This proposal echoes the Finnish and South Korean reserve force models examined in Part Two, and it raises important questions about defense economics, manpower policy, and the sociological implications of a much larger proportion of the population with military training.

Whether any of these reform ambitions survive the transition from manifesto politics to actual governance remains to be seen. What is analytically clear, and what this part seeks to make practically useful, is that the legal and institutional architecture for genuine security sector reform exists in comparative experience and in established principles of constitutional design. The challenge is to translate that comparative wisdom into legislation that is adapted to Bangladesh's specific constitutional framework, political culture, institutional capabilities, and strategic environment.

1.4 The Principal-Agent Problem in Security Governance

Understanding why security sector reform is so persistently difficult requires engagement with one of the most important analytical frameworks in political science: the principal-agent problem. This framework, which originated in economics but has been extensively applied to public administration and governance theory, describes the difficulties that arise when one party, the principal, delegates authority to another party, the agent, to act on the principal's behalf, and the agent has information, capabilities, or interests that differ from those of the principal.

In the context of security governance, the principals are the people of Bangladesh, represented through their democratic institutions, primarily the parliament and the elected government. The agents are the security institutions, the armed forces, police, intelligence agencies, and paramilitary forces. The principal-agent problem arises because the agents possess specialized knowledge and capabilities that the principals cannot fully monitor or evaluate; because the agents have institutional interests, including budgets, autonomy, prestige, and the perpetuation of particular doctrines and practices, that may diverge from the security interests of the population; and because the agents operate in conditions of secrecy that make oversight inherently difficult.

The standard solutions to principal-agent problems in governance are well established in theory. They include clear statutory definition of the agent's mandate, powers, and limitations; multiple layers of oversight, including legislative, executive, and judicial; independent auditing and inspection; transparency requirements that allow principals to monitor agent behavior; and accountability mechanisms, including disciplinary procedures, criminal prosecution, and civil liability, that create credible consequences for agents who abuse their authority.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's security governance failure is comprehensible through this lens. The principal-agent relationship between democratic institutions and security agencies has been systematically undermined by three mechanisms. First, the legislative framework has been so incomplete and ambiguous that the agents' mandates are effectively undefined, removing the baseline against which deviation from authorized behavior could even be measured. Second, oversight institutions, particularly parliament, have been deliberately weakened through constitutional design choices, political culture, and active obstruction by those in control of the security apparatus. Third, accountability mechanisms have either been non-existent or have been captured by political interests that benefit from impunity, making the credible threat of consequences for abuse essentially hollow.

The reform task, therefore, is not simply to pass new laws. It is to reconstruct the entire principal-agent relationship through legislation that clearly defines mandates, strengthens oversight institutions, creates genuine accountability mechanisms, and builds the political and civil society capacity to make those mechanisms work in practice. This is a generational project, not a legislative session's work. But it has to start somewhere, and it has to start with the legal foundation.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

2.1 The Constitution as the Supreme Security Document

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972 and subsequently amended multiple times, is the foundational document of Bangladesh's legal order, including its security governance framework. Understanding the constitutional basis for defense governance, including its explicit provisions, its silences, its ambiguities, and its interpretive controversies, is essential for any serious reform project.

The constitutional provisions most directly relevant to defense governance appear in several parts of the document. Article 60 provides that the Bangladesh Rifles, the police force, and other defense services shall be constituted and their conditions of service regulated in accordance with law, a deliberately broad formulation that does not specify the content of that law. Article 61 designates the President as the Supreme Commander of the defense services. Article 66 provides that Parliament shall consist of three hundred members elected from single territorial constituencies. The Sixth Schedule, which defines the emergency powers of the state, is particularly relevant because it specifies the conditions under which fundamental rights may be suspended and the security forces may be deployed in extraordinary circumstances.

The Fourth Amendment of 1975, which preceded the first military coup by barely months, fundamentally altered the constitutional character of the political system by establishing a presidential one-party state. This amendment, and the subsequent amendments enacted under military governments, layered constitutional instortions onto the original 1972 framework that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

created structural vulnerabilities in democratic governance that have never been fully resolved. The Fifteenth Amendment of 2011, which reinstated the caretaker government provision and made the fundamental principles of the state unamendable, and the 2024 post-revolution constitutional changes, added further layers of complexity.

For the purposes of security sector reform, the most important constitutional questions are: who has the constitutional authority to define the mandate and powers of the security forces, who has the authority to deploy those forces, what constitutional protections constrain the exercise of security force powers, and what constitutional mechanisms exist for oversight and accountability. The answers to these questions are not as clear as a well-designed constitution should make them, and this ambiguity is itself a governance problem.

The principle of parliamentary sovereignty, which is central to the Westminster constitutional tradition that Bangladesh inherited, establishes that Parliament is the supreme law-making authority and that no other institution, including the executive and the armed forces, has authority except what Parliament has granted. This principle implies that the entire architecture of security governance should rest on a comprehensive legislative foundation enacted by Parliament. But Bangladesh has historically operated in a way that inverts this principle, with the executive and the security forces claiming inherent prerogative powers that are not derived from parliamentary enactment. The reform challenge is to restore the proper constitutional hierarchy.

2.2 The Fundamental Rights Framework and its Security Implications

The fundamental rights chapter of the Bangladesh Constitution, Articles 26 through 44, establishes the basic rights of citizens and imposes corresponding obligations on the state, including its security agencies. These rights include the right to equality (Article 27), freedom from discrimination (Article 28), freedom of movement (Article 36), freedom of assembly (Article 37), freedom of association (Article 38), freedom of thought and conscience (Article 39), and freedom of profession (Article 40). They also include the right to protection of life and personal liberty under Article 32, which provides that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.

Article 32 is the constitutional provision most directly implicated in the documented abuses of security forces in Bangladesh, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detention. The DGFI's documented practice of detaining individuals without legal basis, the RAB's institutionalized pattern of extrajudicial killings styled as "crossfire" incidents, and the army's deployment for internal security operations without clear legal authorization have all violated the constitutional guarantee of Article 32, as well as Bangladesh's obligations under international human rights law, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh ratified in 2000.

The constitutional framework also includes derogation clauses, provisions that allow fundamental rights to be suspended in emergency situations. Article 47A, inserted by the Fourth Amendment and retained in subsequent constitutional revisions, allows for the suspension of certain fundamental rights during states of emergency proclaimed under Article 141A. The conditions for proclaiming emergencies and the scope of permissible derogations have been

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sources of ongoing controversy, particularly given Bangladesh's history of using emergency powers as instruments of political repression rather than genuine security crises.

The reform agenda in this area requires both constitutional and legislative action. At the constitutional level, clearer articulation of the conditions under which emergency powers may be invoked, clearer limits on the scope of permissible derogations from fundamental rights, and explicit constitutional protection for the principles of habeas corpus and judicial review even during emergencies would significantly strengthen the rights-based framework for security governance. At the legislative level, the enactment of a law governing the use of security forces in internal security operations, with specific procedural requirements, oversight mechanisms, and accountability provisions, is urgently needed.

2.3 Parliamentary Authority over Defense: Constitutional Provisions and their Practical Failures

The constitutional relationship between Parliament and the defense sector reveals one of the most significant structural gaps in Bangladesh's democratic governance. While the Constitution establishes Parliament as the supreme legislative body and the executive as accountable to Parliament, the practical relationship between the Jatiya Sangsad and the defense establishment has been characterized by deliberate exclusion and institutional marginalization.

The defense budget, which for the fiscal year 2025-26 amounts to approximately forty thousand six hundred and ninety-eight crore taka, the majority allocated to operational costs covering salaries, logistics, and day-to-day military activities, is presented to Parliament as a global figure without the detailed line-item breakdown that would be necessary for genuine parliamentary scrutiny. The classified components of the defense budget, including intelligence budgets and special procurement accounts, are not subject to any parliamentary review at all, not even in closed session by the defense committee.

This arrangement has no constitutional justification. The Constitution does not grant the executive or the armed forces the right to exclude Parliament from defense budget oversight. It reflects instead a political convenience that has hardened into institutional practice: successive governments, whether civilian or military, have found it easier to manage the defense sector's institutional interests when Parliament is kept at arm's length.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence exists as a constitutional body but has historically operated without the investigative authority, professional staff, security clearances, or political independence necessary for genuine oversight. Its members typically lack the technical expertise to engage with complex defense procurement decisions, military doctrine questions, or intelligence policy issues. Its proceedings are rarely substantive. Its reports, when they are produced, rarely contain analysis that goes beyond the information provided by the Ministry of Defence itself.

Comparative experience from functioning parliamentary democracies provides a clear model for improvement. The United Kingdom's Defence Select Committee has professional staff with security clearances, the authority to call witnesses from any part of the defense establishment, the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

power to commission independent technical assessments, and a tradition of producing substantive reports that genuinely influence policy. Germany's Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, an ombudsman institution established in 1956, provides a separate mechanism for individual service members and the general public to raise concerns about the conduct of the armed forces. The South Korean National Assembly's Special Committee on the Budget and Accounts conducts line-by-line review of defense appropriations. These comparative models will be examined in detail later in this part.

The immediate constitutional reform priority is to amend the Standing Orders of the Jatiya Sangsad to strengthen the mandate, powers, and resources of the defence committee; to establish in legislation the obligation of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Division to provide the committee with full budgetary information, including classified elements in closed session; and to create the professional staff capacity that meaningful parliamentary oversight requires.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT

3.1 The Legislative Vacuum and its Consequences

The single most important structural deficiency in Bangladesh's defense governance framework is the absence of a National Defense Act or equivalent comprehensive legislation defining the legal framework within which the armed forces operate, the conditions under which they may be deployed, their accountability to democratic institutions, and the rights and obligations of service members. This is not a minor gap. It is a fundamental failure of democratic governance that has direct and serious consequences for how the armed forces function and what they do.

As noted in the review of the existing framework in Part Two of this textbook, Bangladesh's military legal framework currently rests on three service-specific acts: the Army Act of 1952, the Navy Ordinance of 1961, and the Air Force Act of 1953. All three of these instruments are colonial or early post-independence in origin, drafted without reference to the fundamental rights framework of the 1972 Constitution, without reference to international human rights law obligations that Bangladesh subsequently incurred, and without the institutional design features necessary for democratic accountability.

The Army Act of 1952, which predates Bangladesh's independence by nearly two decades and was enacted for the purposes of British India's successor state Pakistan, contains provisions that are not merely outdated but constitutionally suspect. Its court-martial procedures do not provide for independent judicial review. Its disciplinary regime grants commanding officers powers of punishment that would be unconstitutional if applied by civilian authorities. Its chain-of-command accountability structure creates no mechanism for external oversight. Its provisions relating to the use of military force in civil disturbances reflect colonial assumptions about the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

proper relationship between the armed forces and the civilian population that are fundamentally inconsistent with the democratic character of the Bangladesh state.

The consequences of this legislative vacuum are observable and documented. Without clear statutory authority, the armed forces have been deployed for internal security operations in ways that blur the line between military and police functions, potentially in violation of constitutional rights. Without clear disciplinary rules consistent with human rights standards, abuses within the armed forces have been addressed (or not addressed) through opaque internal processes that provide no transparency or external accountability. Without clear procurement law, defense acquisition has proceeded in ways that create opportunities for corruption and waste. Without clear intelligence oversight law, the DGFI has operated as an essentially unconstrained internal security agency.

The case for a National Defense Act is therefore not merely an argument for administrative tidiness. It is an argument from the foundational principles of democratic constitutionalism: that government power must be exercised on the basis of legal authority granted by the democratic legislature, within limits established by that legislature, subject to accountability mechanisms established by that legislature. This is not a Western imposition on Bangladesh's constitutional tradition. It is the logic of Bangladesh's own Constitution, which in its original form represented precisely this commitment to constitutional governance.

3.2 Comparative Models: What a National Defense Act Should Contain

The comparative literature on national defense legislation is rich, and a careful review of the principal models provides a clear picture of the content that a comprehensive Bangladesh National Defense Act should address.

Australia's Defence Act of 1903, extensively amended and modernized through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, provides perhaps the most comprehensive and most thoroughly democratic model available. The Australian Act creates the Australian Defence Force as a legal entity, defines its constitutional relationship to the elected government, establishes the command authority of the Governor-General as Commander-in-Chief and the operational authority of the Minister for Defence, defines the conditions for deployment of the defence force both domestically and internationally, creates the Defence Force Discipline Act as a separate instrument governing military justice, and establishes the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force as an independent oversight mechanism.

The Australian model is particularly instructive for Bangladesh because Australia, like Bangladesh, operates under a Westminster constitutional tradition and has wrestled with the difficult question of how to maintain democratic control of the armed forces while preserving the operational effectiveness that requires significant delegated authority to military commanders.

South Africa's Defence Act of 2002 represents a different but equally instructive model, crafted in the context of democratic transition from apartheid-era militarism, a context that has some resonance with Bangladesh's need for post-authoritarian reform. The South African Act establishes the principle of civilian secretariat control over the defence department, with the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

military hierarchy reporting to a civilian Secretary for Defence rather than directly to the Minister. It creates an independent Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence with full access to classified information. It establishes a Defence Inspectorate with the authority to investigate any aspect of the defence force's activities. And it creates a reserve force system integrated with the regular force but with its own command structure and activation procedures.

Germany's Basic Law and its implementing legislation provides the most philosophically sophisticated model, shaped as it is by the German determination after 1945 to ensure that the military could never again become an autonomous power within the state. The concept of the Innere Fuhrung, or internal leadership, which defines the German military profession's relationship to democratic values, is embedded in legislation and service regulations in ways that make democratic orientation not merely a formal requirement but a genuine professional identity. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, the Wehrbeauftragter, is a constitutional officer with the authority to investigate any complaint from any service member or any member of the public about the conduct of the armed forces, and whose annual report to the Bundestag is a genuine instrument of accountability.

Canada's National Defence Act, originally enacted in 1950 and substantially reformed in 1998 following a series of military scandals, provides yet another relevant model. The Canadian reforms introduced the Judge Advocate General's office as an independent legal authority within the armed forces, created the Military Police Complaints Commission as an independent oversight body for military police, established the Canadian Forces Grievance Authority as an independent mechanism for service members to seek redress without going through the chain of command, and strengthened parliamentary oversight through enhanced committee powers.

From these comparative models, the essential elements of a Bangladesh National Defense Act can be identified. The Act should establish the constitutional character and mandate of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. It should define the command authority structure, clarifying the relationship between the President as Commander-in-Chief, the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister as head of government, the Minister of Defence, the Armed Forces Division, the service chiefs, and field commanders. It should establish the conditions for deployment of the armed forces, both for external defense and for any internal security role, with specific parliamentary authorization requirements for extended domestic deployments. It should create an independent military justice system that guarantees fair trial rights consistent with constitutional and international standards. It should establish independent oversight mechanisms with real authority and access. And it should define the rights and obligations of service members in a manner consistent with constitutional fundamental rights.

3.3 The Command Authority Question: Constitutional and Political Dimensions

The question of command authority in Bangladesh's armed forces is simultaneously a constitutional law question, a political science question, and a practical security governance question of the first importance. It is also, as Bangladesh's political history demonstrates, a question on which democratic governance and military institutional interests frequently come into direct conflict.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh Constitution designates the President as the Supreme Commander of the defense services under Article 61. But the President in Bangladesh's parliamentary constitutional order is a largely ceremonial figure whose substantive powers are minimal except in carefully defined constitutional circumstances. Real executive authority is exercised by the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister and the cabinet. This creates an inherent tension: the Supreme Commander does not actually command, and the real locus of political authority over the armed forces is not constitutionally defined in the same explicit terms.

In practice, under the Awami League government, this tension was resolved through the Armed Forces Division, which is a division of the Prime Minister's Office and serves as the effective political interlocutor between the government and the armed forces. The AFD, as described in its official mandate, is a Joint Coordinating Headquarters for the three services and also functions as a Joint Command Centre during war situations. This arrangement gives the Prime Minister direct access to the military command structure without going through the Ministry of Defence, which is the more accountable and parliament-facing institution.

The dual-track structure, with both the AFD under the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Defence as a cabinet ministry, creates institutional ambiguity that has practical consequences. The Ministry of Defence is subject to parliamentary scrutiny in ways that the Armed Forces Division, as an executive office, is not. Defense policy decisions made through the AFD channel are therefore effectively shielded from parliamentary oversight, while decisions nominally going through the MoD are subject to at least formal accountability. A National Defense Act should rationalize this dual structure by establishing a clear single channel of democratic accountability.

The comparative experience of parliamentary democracies suggests that the optimal arrangement places substantive defense authority with the Minister of Defence, who is a member of cabinet accountable to Parliament, supported by a civilian-led Ministry that has genuine policy authority over the armed forces and the capacity to exercise that authority effectively. This does not mean civilian micromanagement of operational decisions, which would indeed undermine military effectiveness. It means civilian policy authority over the strategic purposes for which military capabilities are developed and used, over the budget allocation that shapes those capabilities, over the appointments of senior officers who command the forces, and over the oversight mechanisms that ensure accountability.

In Bangladesh's context, achieving this arrangement requires both legal reform and cultural change. The legal reform requires a National Defense Act that clearly establishes the Minister of Defence's authority and the accountability of the armed forces to the elected government. The cultural change requires sustained effort to develop a professional civil service within the Ministry of Defence with the expertise to exercise real policy authority, and to develop within the armed forces a culture of political accountability that accepts civilian oversight as legitimate and necessary rather than as an intrusion.

3.4 Draft Framework for a Bangladesh National Defense Act: Preliminary Architecture

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The following represents a preliminary draft framework for a Bangladesh National Defense Act, drawing on the comparative models reviewed above, adapted to Bangladesh's constitutional framework, and informed by the specific governance challenges that Part One and Part Two of this textbook have identified. This is not a final legislative text but a structured analytical framework intended to guide the drafting process.

The Act should be organized into the following major parts.

The first part, titled Establishment and Constitutional Character, should confirm that the Bangladesh Armed Forces are constituted by and accountable to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; that their fundamental purpose is the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bangladesh and the protection of the constitutional order; that they are subordinate to and under the command of the elected government of Bangladesh; and that they are bound in all their activities by the Constitution, applicable legislation, and the international law of armed conflict.

The second part, titled Command and Authority, should define with precision the constitutional chain of command. It should specify that the President, as Supreme Commander, exercises this function on the advice of the Council of Ministers; that the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister is responsible to Parliament for defense policy; that the Minister of Defence is the political head of the defense establishment and has authority to issue policy directives to all elements of the defense establishment; that the Secretary of Defence is the senior civil servant responsible for the administration of the Ministry and its statutory functions; that the Armed Forces Division serves as the joint operational headquarters of the three services under the authority of the Minister of Defence; and that the three service chiefs command their respective services in accordance with policy directives issued by the Minister of Defence.

The third part, titled Deployment Authority, should establish the conditions and procedures under which the armed forces may be deployed. For external defense purposes, the Chief Adviser in council should have authority to deploy the armed forces, with notification to Parliament within forty-eight hours and a requirement for parliamentary authorization for any deployment exceeding ninety days. For peace operations under United Nations or other international mandates, parliamentary authorization should be required before deployment. For internal security deployments, the Act should establish that the armed forces may be deployed in aid of the civil power only when the civilian security forces have been exhausted or are insufficient, only on the written request of the relevant provincial authority or the Chief Adviser, only for a defined period not exceeding thirty days without parliamentary authorization, and only subject to specific rules of engagement approved by the Minister of Defence and publicly disclosed.

The fourth part, titled Military Justice, should establish an independent military justice system consistent with constitutional fair trial rights and international standards. This part is discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter of this part.

The fifth part, titled Oversight and Accountability, should establish a Defense Inspectorate with an independent Inspector-General appointed by the President on the advice of the Constitutional

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Appointments Commission; the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence with specified powers of access, inquiry, and reporting; a Defense Ombudsman for individual grievances; and an independent audit function for defense expenditure.

The sixth part, titled Rights and Obligations of Service Members, should establish the constitutional rights of service members that may not be derogated by military discipline, including freedom from torture, cruel or degrading treatment; the right to legal representation in disciplinary proceedings; the right to make a protected complaint to the Defense Ombudsman without fear of reprisal; and the right to conscientious objection to unlawful orders.

The seventh part, titled Defense Procurement, should establish the legal framework for defense acquisition, including requirements for competitive procurement, transparency, parliamentary notification of major acquisitions above a defined threshold, and accountability mechanisms for procurement decisions.

CHAPTER FOUR: MILITARY JUSTICE REFORM AND THE JURISPRUDENCE OF ARMED FORCES LAW

4.1 The Theory of Military Justice: Why Armed Forces Need Their Own Legal System

Military justice is one of the most intellectually contested areas of legal theory. The fundamental question is whether the armed forces, as a specialized institution with unique disciplinary requirements rooted in the necessities of combat, require a separate legal system that operates according to different principles from ordinary civil and criminal law, or whether the universality of the rule of law demands that service members enjoy the same legal protections as all other citizens.

The case for a separate military justice system has been articulated with sophistication by legal theorists across different traditions. The core argument draws on the unique operational demands of the military: in combat or in preparation for combat, rapid obedience to lawful orders may be literally a matter of life and death, for the individual soldier, for comrades, and for the mission that the force is tasked to accomplish. A disciplinary system that allowed service members to contest orders through ordinary civilian legal procedures, or that applied the same procedural timeline as civil litigation, would be incompatible with operational effectiveness. Military justice systems therefore typically include summary disciplinary procedures that allow commanding officers to deal quickly with minor disciplinary infractions, as well as more elaborate court-martial procedures for serious offenses.

The case against completely separate military justice systems is equally powerful and draws on core principles of the rule of law and constitutional rights. If military justice systems are designed primarily to enforce obedience and maintain discipline, rather than to discover the truth and do justice, they risk becoming instruments of institutional self-protection that shield

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

misconduct from accountability. The history of military justice systems across many countries, including Bangladesh's own experience, reveals patterns of institutional self-protection, particularly in cases involving allegations of serious human rights abuses by service members, that fundamentally undermine the legitimacy of the military justice system as a justice-doing institution.

The jurisprudential resolution of this tension has evolved significantly in recent decades, primarily through the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and the constitutional courts of various democratic states. The European Court has developed a body of case law, beginning with Findlay v. United Kingdom in 1997 and continuing through numerous subsequent decisions, that requires military justice systems to satisfy the same standards of independence and impartiality as civilian courts if they are to be accepted as consistent with the fair trial guarantees of the European Convention on Human Rights. These standards include: composition of the tribunal by independent members without institutional loyalty to the prosecution or the military command hierarchy; separation of the prosecutorial and adjudicative functions; public proceedings except where national security genuinely requires secrecy; the right to legal representation; the right to appeal to an independent civilian court; and prohibition on command influence over the outcome of proceedings.

For Bangladesh, where the military justice system still operates primarily through court-martial procedures under the 1952 Army Act that predate these developments, the reform challenge is substantial. The existing system lacks independent adjudicators, operates with minimal procedural transparency, does not provide adequate rights of appeal to civilian courts, and has historically been used as a mechanism for managing institutional reputation rather than achieving justice.

4.2 The Enforced Disappearances Crisis and Military Justice: A Case Study

On October 11, 2025, in a development that would have been unthinkable under the previous government, a tribunal issued arrest warrants against sixteen officers of the Bangladesh Army on criminal charges of enforced disappearance. In immediate response, Army Headquarters released a statement disclosing that the indicted officials had been taken into military custody. This episode crystallizes both the progress and the limitations of Bangladesh's post-revolution accountability effort.

The progress is genuine and historically significant. The fact that a judicial tribunal could issue arrest warrants for military officers on charges of enforced disappearance, and that the army headquarters publicly acknowledged taking those officers into military custody, represents a fundamental break from the previous era in which security force personnel enjoyed virtual impunity for any conduct carried out in the course of political repression. The public accountability dimension of this action, the fact that it was conducted through a visible institutional process rather than swept under the rug, is itself a form of norm-setting that will have lasting institutional significance if it is sustained.

The limitation, however, is equally significant. The officers were taken into military custody rather than civilian custody, and their subsequent legal proceedings would presumably occur

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

within the military justice system rather than the civilian criminal courts. This raises the question of whether a military justice system, with its inherent structural biases toward institutional protection, is the appropriate venue for adjudicating serious human rights crimes committed by service members.

The international standard on this question is clear and consistent. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions has consistently held that military courts should not have jurisdiction over serious human rights violations by military personnel, because the structural conflicts of interest within military institutions make impartial judgment impossible. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has issued multiple judgments establishing the principle that serious human rights violations by military personnel must be tried in civilian courts. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has adopted similar positions. The Council of Europe has required member states to ensure civilian court jurisdiction over human rights violations by security forces.

Bangladesh's existing legislative framework does not reflect these standards. The Army Act of 1952 vests court-martial jurisdiction over military personnel in procedures that do not meet international fair trial standards and that have no provision for civilian court oversight. The reform required is both legislative and institutional: legislation should establish that serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, torture, and rape, committed by military or intelligence personnel are subject to civilian court jurisdiction, with the civilian courts applying international human rights standards in their proceedings. This is not an attack on the armed forces as an institution. It is a necessary condition for the rule of law.

4.3 The Military Justice Reform Agenda: Detailed Analysis

A comprehensive military justice reform agenda for Bangladesh should address four interconnected dimensions.

The first dimension is jurisdictional reform. The current overlapping and poorly defined jurisdictions of military courts and civilian courts over service members create opportunities for forum-shopping by military authorities seeking to protect personnel from accountability. A reformed framework should establish clear rules: military courts have exclusive jurisdiction over purely military offenses, meaning offenses that have no civilian equivalent, such as desertion, insubordination, and dereliction of military duty; concurrent jurisdiction applies to ordinary criminal offenses where the offense was committed in the course of military service and there is no victim who is a civilian; and civilian court jurisdiction is mandatory for serious human rights violations and for any offense where the alleged victim is a civilian.

The second dimension is structural reform of the court-martial system. The existing court-martial system concentrates prosecutorial, adjudicative, and command authority in ways that fundamentally compromise impartiality. Reform should introduce an independent Judge Advocate General's office modeled on the Canadian and UK systems, with qualified military lawyers who are independent of the command hierarchy in the exercise of their legal functions; independent military judges with security of tenure who cannot be removed for decisions that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

displease commanding officers; an independent review mechanism with civilian judicial oversight; and full disclosure of court-martial proceedings to the accused, with adequate time and resources to prepare a defense.

The third dimension is the reform of summary disciplinary proceedings, the informal commander-level procedures for minor discipline that are unavoidable in any military system but that can become vehicles for abuse. Summary proceedings should be subject to clear procedural rules; the punishments available through summary proceedings should be limited to minor administrative sanctions; there should be a right of appeal from summary proceedings to the formal court-martial system; and the proceedings should be documented and subject to audit by the Inspector-General.

The fourth dimension is the protection of military whistleblowers. One of the most powerful forces for institutional accountability is the willingness of insiders to report misconduct through official channels or, where official channels are corrupted, through public disclosure. Bangladesh's military culture has historically treated internal dissent as institutional disloyalty, a culture that is incompatible with genuine accountability. Reform should establish statutory protection for service members who report unlawful orders, human rights violations, or corruption through designated official channels, with disciplinary proceedings against officers who retaliate against complainants.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTELLIGENCE LAW REFORM AND THE GOVERNANCE OF SECRET POWER

5.1 The Intelligence Challenge: Why Intelligence Agencies Require Special Legal Treatment

Intelligence agencies occupy a unique position in the landscape of democratic governance. Their function, gathering and analyzing information about threats to national security, requires secrecy that is in fundamental tension with the transparency principles of democratic government. Their powers, including surveillance, infiltration of organizations, and the collection of personal information, impinge directly on the fundamental rights of individuals in ways that must be legally authorized and judicially constrained. And their institutional culture, shaped by the values of operational security and professional secrecy, can easily become a culture of institutional self-protection that resists all accountability.

The history of intelligence agencies in democratic states is, in significant measure, a history of agencies that began with legitimate national security missions and gradually expanded their activities to include domestic political surveillance, interference in democratic processes, and the protection of incumbent governments from legitimate political opposition. The Church Committee investigation into the CIA and FBI in the United States in 1975, which revealed decades of illegal domestic surveillance and political interference, provided the most dramatic documentation of this pattern. But similar patterns are visible in the histories of the UK's MI5,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

France's Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire, Germany's Verfassungsschutz, and intelligence agencies in virtually every democratic state that has faced the challenge of maintaining effective intelligence capability while preventing abuse.

Bangladesh's intelligence agencies have a documented history of abuse that surpasses most of these international comparisons in its severity and political character. The DGFI, which is technically a military intelligence agency focused on external threats but has historically operated extensively in the domestic political sphere, has been documented by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the UN as involved in extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and systematic political repression. The National Security Intelligence, NSI, is a civilian agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs that has similarly operated as an instrument of political surveillance and repression under successive governments.

The theoretical framework for intelligence law reform draws on the concept of the rule of law applied to secret power. The German legal theorist Christoph Gusy has argued that intelligence agencies, precisely because they operate in secret and their powers therefore cannot be constrained by the ordinary mechanisms of public accountability, require a specially intensive legislative framework, the concept he terms "parliamentary control without public control." This means that the legislature must exercise the oversight function that the public cannot exercise directly, and must do so with access to the same information that the intelligence agencies possess.

The Snowden revelations of 2013, which exposed the scope of the National Security Agency's global surveillance program and provoked a global debate about intelligence oversight, gave renewed urgency to intelligence law reform in many democratic states. The UK's Investigatory Powers Act of 2016, Canada's National Security Act of 2017, Germany's BND-Reform-Gesetz of 2021, and Australia's Intelligence Services Legislation Amendment Act of 2023 all represent responses to this debate, and all provide instructive models for Bangladesh's reform agenda.

5.2 Bangladesh's Intelligence Architecture: An Assessment

Bangladesh's intelligence architecture consists of several overlapping agencies with poorly defined mandates, unclear legal authorities, and minimal oversight. Understanding this architecture is necessary for any serious reform effort.

The primary military intelligence agency is the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, or DGFI, which is embedded within the Armed Forces Division and therefore within the Prime Minister's Office structure. The DGFI is constitutionally anomalous in that it is a military intelligence agency whose mandate theoretically encompasses external military intelligence but that has historically operated extensively in the domestic political domain. The decision, confirmed by the interim government in October 2025, to reform the DGFI and strengthen its focus on external threats and transborder security issues, particularly along the borders with India and Myanmar, represents the correct policy direction but requires substantial legislative architecture to implement effectively.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The National Security Intelligence, NSI, is the primary civilian intelligence agency, operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The NSI's mandate encompasses both foreign intelligence collection and domestic counterintelligence, and it has a significant analytical capacity. Like the DGFI, the NSI lacks a statutory charter defining its powers and limitations, and it has historically operated without meaningful oversight.

The Directorate General of National Security Intelligence, which is a separate entity from the NSI despite the similarity of names, operates under a more directly military command structure. The Special Branch of the Bangladesh Police performs intelligence functions in the context of domestic law enforcement. The Intelligence Cell of the Border Guard Bangladesh provides border security intelligence. The Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate performs financial intelligence functions.

The fragmentation of this architecture, with multiple agencies having overlapping mandates, unclear jurisdictions, and minimal coordination mechanisms, is itself a governance problem. Intelligence produced by multiple agencies without a centralized analytical capacity to reconcile and synthesize that intelligence leads to failures of assessment, duplication of effort, and institutional competition that degrades the quality of intelligence provided to policymakers. The proposal by the BIPSS President at the December 2025 conference for a National Security Council as a central coordination mechanism directly addresses this problem.

5.3 The NCP Reform Proposal and its Legislative Implications

The National Citizen Party's January 2026 election manifesto included the most detailed publicly articulated proposal for intelligence sector reform that any major political party in Bangladesh has advanced. The NCP proposed restructuring the DGFI through the introduction of a clear and stringent legal framework, with the objective of preventing intelligence agencies from being used for political purposes or becoming involved in human rights abuses. The proposed framework would clearly define the scope, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms governing intelligence operations, with regular parliamentary review and oversight to ensure transparency.

This proposal has both great merit and significant gaps that a serious legislative process would need to fill. Its merit lies in its clear articulation of the democratic principle that intelligence agencies must operate within a legal framework that defines and limits their powers. No democratic state allows its intelligence agencies to operate on an essentially discretionary basis, exercising whatever powers seem operationally useful without legal authorization. The NCP's commitment to defining the scope and responsibilities of intelligence operations in law is the minimum requirement of constitutional governance.

The gaps in the NCP proposal, as publicly articulated, include the absence of any specification of how the legal framework would define permissible intelligence activities; what oversight mechanisms would be created and how they would function in practice; what remedies would be available to individuals who are the subjects of unlawful intelligence activities; and how the framework would address the historical record of past abuses that requires accountability even as it establishes norms for future conduct.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

A comprehensive Intelligence Oversight Act for Bangladesh should address these gaps through the following framework. The Act should establish a statutory charter for each intelligence agency, defining with specificity the categories of intelligence activity each agency is authorized to undertake; the legal standards that must be satisfied before particular activities, including surveillance, infiltration, and the collection and retention of personal data, may be authorized; the authorization procedures, including judicial warrant requirements for the most privacy-invasive activities; the record-keeping and reporting requirements; and the prohibitions on activities that are incompatible with democratic governance, including surveillance of political parties, interference in electoral processes, collection of information about individuals solely on the basis of their lawful political, religious, or cultural activities.

The Act should establish a Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee with full access to classified intelligence and the authority to examine the activities, administration, expenditure, and policy of each intelligence agency. The model of the UK's Intelligence and Security Committee, established by the Intelligence Services Act 1994 and reformed by the Justice and Security Act 2013, provides a relevant precedent, though Bangladesh should learn from the criticisms that the UK committee has faced for being too closely tied to the executive and go further in establishing genuine independence for the committee.

The Act should establish an independent Intelligence Commissioner with security expertise and statutory authority to conduct inspections of intelligence agencies, review the use of intrusive intelligence powers, examine individual complaints, and report annually to Parliament on the state of intelligence oversight. This function should be entirely separate from the parliamentary committee function, providing an additional layer of independent oversight.

The Act should establish a judicial authorization requirement for the most serious intelligence powers. Interception of communications, covert access to digital devices, acquisition of bulk personal data, use of informants against political organizations, and physical search of premises should all require judicial authorization from a specialized court of judicial commissioners with appropriate security clearances. This is the fundamental protection against intelligence agencies becoming engines of political surveillance.

5.4 The DGFI Reform: From Political Instrument to Professional Intelligence Agency

The specific challenge of reforming the DGFI deserves extended analysis because it illustrates the deep structural difficulties of intelligence agency reform in a politicized security environment. The DGFI has been documented as one of the most politically active and abusive military intelligence agencies in South Asia, having operated extensive internal political surveillance networks, maintained unofficial detention facilities, conducted extrajudicial interrogations, and provided intelligence support for the political repression of the Hasina era. Reforming it is not merely a matter of passing a law. It requires addressing the institutional culture, the personnel, the organizational structure, and the political relationships that have made it what it is.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The October 2025 confirmation by the interim government of plans to reform the DGFI, focusing it on external threats and transborder security issues, represents the correct strategic direction. The DGFI's legitimate mission, gathering military intelligence about external threats from India, Myanmar, China, and other potential adversaries, is a genuine and important national security function that requires professional capability and appropriate resources. Focusing the DGFI on this legitimate mission and away from domestic political surveillance is both constitutionally correct and strategically rational.

But the specifics of how this refocusing is achieved matter enormously. Simply issuing a directive that the DGFI should focus on external threats does not change the institutional culture, the surveillance infrastructure, the information relationships with political actors, or the career incentives that have shaped the DGFI's behavior. Genuine reform requires personnel vetting to remove individuals with documented involvement in human rights abuses; restructuring of the organizational architecture to separate external intelligence functions from any residual internal security functions; transfer of any legitimate domestic counterintelligence functions to the NSI under civilian oversight; dismantling of the infrastructure for domestic political surveillance; and establishment of the oversight mechanisms described above.

The question of accountability for past abuses is equally important and equally difficult. The October 2025 arrest warrants for sixteen army officers on enforced disappearance charges demonstrated that the judicial system is capable of pursuing accountability for past abuses. Extending this accountability to DGFI personnel responsible for documented abuses, while protecting the institutional capacity necessary for genuine intelligence work, requires careful legal and political management. Blanket amnesties would undermine the rule of law and betray the victims of abuse. Targeted accountability, through a transparent process that respects fair trial rights, is both ethically required and practically sustainable.

CHAPTER SIX: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DOMESTIC SECURITY OPERATIONS

6.1 The Aid to Civil Power Doctrine: Historical Origins and Contemporary Problems

The deployment of military forces in aid of the civil power, meaning the deployment of armed forces to support civilian law enforcement in situations beyond the capacity of the police, is one of the most legally contested areas of security governance in any democratic state. It involves a fundamental tension between two principles: the state's obligation to maintain public order and the security of citizens, which may in extreme circumstances require military capability; and the democratic principle that in a constitutional state governed by the rule of law, the use of armed force against citizens requires the most stringent legal authorization and the most robust accountability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The historical origins of the aid to civil power doctrine lie in the common law tradition of posse comitatus and the feudal obligation of the military to support civil authority. In Bangladesh's legal system, the doctrine derives from the colonial legacy of Section 130 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which provided magistrates with the authority to require military assistance in dispersing unlawful assemblies. This colonial provision reflected the priorities of a colonial administration focused on controlling subject populations rather than the democratic accountability principles that should govern the use of military force in a republic.

The post-independence history of military deployment in Bangladesh's internal security reflects the pathologies of this colonial inheritance. Military forces have been deployed for internal security purposes in circumstances that range from genuine security emergencies to essentially political operations designed to intimidate opposition or suppress legitimate protest. The deployment of the army during the July 2024 protests that ultimately brought down the Hasina government, resulting in documented killings of civilians, represents the most acute recent example of this pattern. The OHCHR fact-finding report documented these killings and the command responsibility of military officers who ordered or failed to prevent them.

The reform task is to establish a legal framework for domestic military deployment that permits genuinely necessary assistance to civil authority in genuine security emergencies, while providing robust legal constraints and accountability mechanisms that prevent the military from being used as an instrument of political repression.

6.2 The International Legal Framework: UN Standards and Comparative Practice

The international legal framework governing the use of military forces in domestic security operations has been developed primarily through the work of United Nations special procedures and through comparative constitutional jurisprudence. The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, adopted in 1990, establish standards for the use of lethal force that apply equally to military personnel when they are deployed in law enforcement roles. These principles require that lethal force be used only when strictly necessary to protect life, that non-lethal means be exhausted before lethal force is used, that force be proportionate to the threat, and that there be a thorough review of any incident involving use of force.

The distinction between military operations governed by the laws of armed conflict and law enforcement operations governed by human rights law has been articulated by the International Committee of the Red Cross and by multiple international human rights bodies. When armed forces are deployed domestically in non-combat situations, they are operating in a law enforcement context and are bound by the more restrictive standards of international human rights law rather than the laws of armed conflict. This distinction has enormous practical implications: under the laws of armed conflict, an identified enemy combatant may be killed. Under international human rights law, force may be used only to protect life when there is no alternative.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's failure to operationalize this distinction has been a principal cause of the civilian casualties during domestic security operations. Military personnel trained for combat operations, with rules of engagement appropriate for armed conflict, deployed in civilian protest situations, have applied military force standards to law enforcement situations, with predictable and deadly results. The reforms required address both the legal framework governing deployment and the training and rules of engagement standards applied to deployed forces.

Comparatively, the most instructive models are from states that have successfully navigated the tension between effective public order maintenance and protection of democratic rights. The UK has developed a detailed legal framework under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Emergency Powers Act 1920, supplemented by the Human Rights Act 1998, that establishes clear conditions for military assistance to civil authority, specific oversight requirements, and strong judicial review of deployment decisions. Spain's Organic Law 5/2005 on National Defence explicitly prohibits the use of the armed forces against Spanish citizens except in the most extreme constitutional emergencies, and requires both parliamentary authorization and judicial oversight for any such deployment. Colombia, which has extensive experience with military deployment in internal security contexts given its decades of insurgency, has developed through Constitutional Court jurisprudence a sophisticated body of law distinguishing between military operations in armed conflict zones and military assistance to police in normal security situations.

6.3 Draft Framework for Domestic Military Deployment Law

A domestic military deployment law for Bangladesh, drawing on these comparative models and the recommendations of the OHCHR and HRW, should establish the following framework.

The law should establish a clear presumption against military deployment for domestic security purposes. The civil police, including the Bangladesh Police and the Border Guard Bangladesh within their respective jurisdictions, are the appropriate agencies for domestic security operations. The armed forces may be deployed only when the civilian security agencies are genuinely insufficient to deal with a specific security situation.

The law should establish a tiered authorization requirement based on the nature and duration of the deployment. For emergency deployments responding to an immediate and serious threat to public safety, the Chief Adviser or designated substitute may authorize deployment for up to seventy-two hours without prior parliamentary approval, with immediate notification to Parliament. For deployments extending beyond seventy-two hours, authorization by a joint session of relevant parliamentary committees, including the Defence Committee and the Home Affairs Committee, sitting in closed session if necessary for security reasons, should be required. For deployments exceeding thirty days, full parliamentary approval in open session should be required, with a public statement of the nature of the deployment, the rules of engagement in force, and the oversight mechanisms in place.

The law should establish mandatory rules of engagement for all military domestic deployments that are consistent with international human rights law standards. These rules of engagement should be publicly available except for genuinely sensitive operational details. They should

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

explicitly prohibit the use of lethal force except in immediate defense of life. They should prohibit the use of military weapons systems designed for combat, such as armored vehicles armed with machine guns, in crowd control situations. They should require that military personnel deployed in civilian areas be accompanied by civilian law enforcement liaison officers with authority to intervene if rules of engagement are being violated.

The law should establish a mandatory independent review of every incident involving the use of force by deployed military personnel, conducted by the Defense Inspectorate with civilian oversight. Results of such reviews should be reported to Parliament and made public, except for genuinely sensitive operational information.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CYBER SAFETY ORDINANCE 2025 AND DEFENSE CYBER GOVERNANCE

7.1 Bangladesh's Cyber Governance Journey: From the Digital Security Act to the Cyber Safety Ordinance

Bangladesh's legislative treatment of cyber security is a case study in the tension between security imperatives and democratic rights that runs through all of security law. The country's first major cyber legislation, the Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006 and particularly its notorious Section 57, was weaponized by the Hasina government to prosecute journalists, bloggers, and political opponents for digital speech. Its successor, the Digital Security Act of 2018, was even more extensively used as an instrument of political censorship, with hundreds of cases filed against journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens for online speech that displeased the government.

The Cyber Safety Ordinance of 2025, promulgated by the Yunus interim government, represents a genuine attempt to reset Bangladesh's cyber governance framework on a rights-consistent basis while maintaining effective mechanisms to address genuine cybercrime and cyber threats. The ordinance's comparative analysis against the previous Digital Security Act reveals significant improvements on several dimensions.

The Cyber Safety Ordinance introduces a National Cyber Safety Council headed by the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister, integrating key stakeholders including ministers, intelligence chiefs, and private sector experts, enhancing coordination and strategic direction in a way that the previous fragmented approach lacked. It dedicates a chapter to the identification and protection of critical information infrastructure, mandating periodic vulnerability assessments. It introduces judicial oversight through the provision of a retired Supreme Court judge, nominated by the Chief Justice, on the National Council, maintaining a balance between executive action and constitutional rights. And it explicitly addresses international cooperation, aligning Bangladesh's cyber policy with international best practices and treaty obligations.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

These are genuine advances. But from the perspective of defense cyber governance, the Cyber Safety Ordinance leaves important gaps that a comprehensive defense cyber policy must address.

7.2 Cyber Defense as a Military Domain: Doctrinal and Legal Dimensions

The integration of cyber operations into military doctrine is one of the defining developments in contemporary defense policy, and it creates a new set of legal and policy challenges that Bangladesh's existing frameworks are not equipped to address. The question of when a cyber operation constitutes an act of aggression equivalent to an armed attack, triggering the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, is among the most contested questions in contemporary international law. The Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations, now in its second edition (Tallinn Manual 2.0, 2017), represents the most comprehensive attempt to apply existing international law to cyber operations, but its conclusions on many key questions remain contested among states.

For Bangladesh, the cyber defense challenge has both offensive and defensive dimensions, though the defensive dimension is more immediately pressing given the country's relative position in the cyber domain. On the defensive side, Bangladesh's critical infrastructure, including its power grid, telecommunications networks, banking system, and government digital infrastructure, is vulnerable to cyber attacks from a range of potential adversaries. The digitalization of Bangladesh's economy, which has accelerated significantly in recent years, creates not just opportunity but vulnerability. The Cyber Safety Ordinance's provisions on critical information infrastructure protection are an important first step, but they need to be supplemented by a comprehensive military cyber defense doctrine and capability.

On the offensive side, the development of military cyber capabilities raises difficult legal and strategic questions. International law does not prohibit states from developing offensive cyber capabilities, but the use of those capabilities is governed by the laws of armed conflict when deployed in armed conflict contexts and by international law norms on sovereignty and non-interference when deployed in peacetime. Bangladesh's military cyber doctrine, to the extent it exists, is not publicly available, and this opacity is itself a governance problem: without public doctrine, there is no public accountability for how cyber capabilities are developed and used.

7.3 The Defense Dimension of Cyber Safety: Legislative Analysis

The Cyber Safety Ordinance's interaction with Bangladesh's defense cyber architecture reveals a fundamental structural problem: the division of cyber security responsibilities between civilian agencies, primarily the Bangladesh Computer Council and the Cyber Safety Council, and military cyber units, is nowhere legally defined or coordinated. This fragmentation creates gaps in both defensive and policy coordination functions.

A comprehensive defense cyber legal framework should establish the following elements. First, it should define the respective mandates of civilian and military cyber agencies, with the civilian agencies responsible for protecting civilian critical infrastructure and the military cyber units responsible for protecting defense networks and providing offensive cyber capability in declared armed conflicts or authorized intelligence operations. Second, it should establish a national cyber

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

incident response framework that coordinates civilian and military responses to serious cyber incidents affecting national security, with clear command and coordination procedures. Third, it should establish legal authorization for military offensive cyber operations, which require the same kind of executive authorization and parliamentary oversight as other military operations.

The challenge of judicial authorization for offensive cyber operations is particularly complex. Unlike physical military operations, cyber operations can be conducted without crossing physical borders and can achieve significant effects without anything that looks like a conventional attack. The Tallinn Manual has argued that states are bound to respect the sovereignty of other states in cyberspace, meaning that cyber operations that cause significant disruption to another state's infrastructure constitute violations of sovereignty even if they fall below the threshold of an armed attack. For Bangladesh, this means that any military cyber operations directed against foreign targets require clear legal authorization and must meet the same standards of proportionality and necessity as physical operations.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE PROCUREMENT LAW AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

8.1 The Political Economy of Defense Corruption: Why Procurement Is the Most Vulnerable Domain

Defense procurement is globally recognized as the sector most vulnerable to corruption in public spending, and Bangladesh's experience is consistent with this international pattern. Several structural features of defense procurement create what corruption researchers call a "perfect storm" for misconduct: extreme information asymmetry between the buyer and seller, national security justifications for secrecy that shield transactions from public scrutiny, large contract values that create high-stakes incentive structures, and long procurement timelines that allow for the gradual normalization of irregular practices.

The Transparency International Defense and Security Program has documented how defense procurement corruption operates across multiple dimensions: in the specification of requirements, where specifications can be written to favor a predetermined supplier; in the selection of procurement method, where competitive tendering can be circumvented through sole-source or restricted procedures; in the evaluation of bids, where technical assessments can be manipulated; in contract negotiation, where pricing and terms can be adjusted to benefit favored suppliers; in contract execution, where performance standards can be waived or compromised; and in contract variation, where original contracts are modified through change orders to add value or change specifications.

Bangladesh's defense procurement has historically been characterized by most of these pathologies. The government-to-government procurement model that Bangladesh uses extensively for its major weapons acquisitions, including the ongoing J-10CE fighter jet procurement through China's CATIC and the proposed Eurofighter acquisition through the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Italian government, provides certain efficiencies but also reduces competitive pressure and transparency. The defense budget analysis for 2025-26 confirms that the majority of the defense budget goes to operational expenses, with development projects receiving a modest allocation, suggesting that major acquisitions are financed through mechanisms that do not go through the regular parliamentary appropriations process.

The proposed forty thousand six hundred and ninety-eight crore taka defense budget for 2025-26 is significant in absolute terms but does not adequately capture the full extent of defense spending, because major weapons acquisitions are typically financed through separate credit or loan arrangements that are approved through distinct processes. The sixty-dollar-per-aircraft J-10CE contract, totaling one point two billion dollars for twenty aircraft, with an additional eight hundred and twenty million dollars for support and training, is being financed through a ten-year payment plan. Whether this financing arrangement is subject to meaningful parliamentary oversight is unclear from available public information.

8.2 The Case for a Defense Procurement Act

Bangladesh's current defense procurement law consists primarily of the Public Procurement Act of 2006 and the Public Procurement Rules of 2008, with a series of exceptions and special provisions for defense procurement that effectively allow the defense sector to circumvent the competitive and transparent procedures that apply to other areas of government spending. The defense exceptions are justified by reference to national security, but the scope of these exceptions, which effectively includes all major procurement, is far broader than genuine security requirements would justify.

A Defense Procurement Act, or alternatively a defense-specific annex to the Public Procurement Act, should establish the following framework.

The Act should establish a competitive procurement requirement for all defense acquisitions above a defined threshold. For acquisitions below the threshold, simplified competitive procedures should apply. For acquisitions above the threshold, full competitive tendering should be the default, with government-to-government acquisition permitted only where specific conditions are satisfied, including a documented inability to satisfy the requirement through competitive commercial procurement and a finding by the Minister of Defence that G2G acquisition offers better value for money.

The Act should establish mandatory parliamentary notification for all acquisitions above a higher threshold, with the relevant parliamentary committee having a period of review during which it may call for additional information or raise concerns. This does not give Parliament a veto over procurement decisions, which would undermine executive responsibility for defense policy, but it creates a mechanism for parliamentary engagement that currently does not exist.

The Act should establish an independent Defense Procurement Audit function, as a specialized unit within the office of the Auditor General with security clearances enabling it to examine classified procurement, with authority to review any defense acquisition and to report findings to Parliament.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Act should establish stringent anti-corruption provisions, including mandatory disclosure of beneficial ownership of defense suppliers, prohibition of agents and intermediaries in government-to-government transactions, mandatory cooling-off periods before defense officials may accept employment with defense suppliers, and criminal penalties for corruption in defense procurement that are proportionate to the sums involved.

8.3 The Bangladesh Defense Economic Zone: Policy Analysis and Legal Framework

The proposed Bangladesh Defense Economic Zone, budgeted at approximately fifteen thousand crore taka and designed to serve as the hub of an indigenous defense industrial base, represents one of the most ambitious and consequential elements of Bangladesh's long-term defense policy. If realized effectively, it could substantially reduce Bangladesh's dependence on external arms suppliers, create significant employment and industrial capacity, and provide the foundation for eventual defense exports. If realized poorly, it could become a monument to industrial policy failure and a vehicle for corruption.

The concept has strategic logic. Bangladesh imports virtually all of its military equipment, creating both strategic vulnerability and a significant drain on foreign exchange. The diversification of procurement toward multiple suppliers, which the post-July Revolution government has pursued with evident energy through partnerships with Turkey, Japan, Italy, China, and others, reduces some strategic vulnerabilities but does not address the fundamental dependence on foreign military technology. An indigenous defense industrial base, even at a relatively modest level of sophistication, would provide both strategic autonomy and industrial capability that no amount of procurement diversification can replace.

The legal framework for the Defense Economic Zone requires careful design on several dimensions. The institutional governance of the zone, including who has authority over investment approvals, technology transfer agreements, intellectual property arrangements, and labor standards, must be clearly defined and free from the capture by military commercial interests that has historically characterized Bangladesh's defense-related enterprises. The technology transfer agreements that will be necessary to develop meaningful indigenous capability must be legally structured to ensure that Bangladesh actually acquires transferable technology and industrial skills, rather than merely assembling imported components under license. The procurement law governing the zone's output must ensure that locally produced defense equipment meets genuine quality and performance standards rather than being purchased by the armed forces on captive-market terms regardless of quality.

The sixty billion dollar combined procurement and industrial development figure that various analyses have projected for Bangladesh's defense modernization through 2040, a figure that should be treated as an analytical benchmark rather than a firm plan, implies the most ambitious state-directed industrial policy in Bangladesh's history. Managing this investment in ways that genuinely build capability rather than generating waste and corruption requires institutional and legal infrastructure of the highest quality.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER NINE: THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: DESIGN, JURISPRUDENCE, AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

9.1 The NSC Concept: Theory and Comparative Origins

The National Security Council concept, first institutionalized in the United States under the National Security Act of 1947, represents one of the most influential organizational innovations in modern governance. The American NSC was designed to address a specific problem that World War II had revealed with lethal clarity: the absence of effective coordination between the military, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic instruments of national power in peacetime, which meant that the country could not translate its enormous power resources into coherent strategic effect until it had been forced into total war.

The American model created a statutory body consisting of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of Defense, with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of Central Intelligence as statutory advisers, and supported by a National Security Council staff headed by a National Security Advisor. This model, which has been extensively modified and adapted by successive American administrations, became the template for NSC systems around the world, though comparative experience shows enormous variation in design and effectiveness.

The theoretical justification for a National Security Council rests on several distinct arguments. The first is the coordination argument: in complex modern states with multiple agencies and ministries having security-relevant functions, no effective policy is possible without a mechanism to coordinate across institutional boundaries. The second is the strategic coherence argument: without a forum at the highest level of government that integrates all the dimensions of national security, strategic decision-making tends to be dominated by whichever department or ministry has the most immediate crisis, rather than by a coherent long-term strategic assessment. The third is the civilian authority argument: an NSC structure that places civilian political leadership at the center of security decision-making ensures that strategic decisions reflect political judgment rather than purely military calculation.

For Bangladesh, the BIPSS president's argument at the December 2025 Dhaka conference that Bangladesh must establish a unified strategic security framework, including a National Security Policy and a central coordination mechanism in the form of a National Security Council, reflects all three of these arguments applied to Bangladesh's specific situation. Bangladesh's current coordination mechanisms are ad hoc, non-statutory, and heavily weighted toward military and intelligence inputs rather than civilian political judgment. The result is security policy that lacks strategic coherence and democratic accountability.

9.2 Comparative NSC Models Relevant to Bangladesh

Several comparative NSC models deserve specific attention for the lessons they offer Bangladesh.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The United Kingdom's National Security Council, established by the Coalition Government under David Cameron in 2010, provides perhaps the most instructive model for Bangladesh. The UK NSC is a cabinet committee, meaning that it has full constitutional legitimacy as an extension of cabinet authority, co-chaired by the Prime Minister and with membership including the Deputy Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Home Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Defence Secretary, and the Chief of the Defence Staff and the heads of the intelligence services as statutory advisers. It is supported by a National Security Secretariat within the Cabinet Office that coordinates the NSC's work and maintains the government's National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The UK model's principal advantages are its integration with the constitutional cabinet structure, its inclusion of economic and diplomatic alongside military and intelligence dimensions, and its support by a professional civilian secretariat with genuine analytical capability. Its principal limitation, which British critics have noted, is that it can be dominated by the permanent bureaucracies of the participating departments, reducing it to a coordination forum for existing departmental positions rather than a generator of genuinely integrated strategic thought.

South Korea's National Security Council, established under the Government Organization Act and operationalized through a series of NSC operational plans, provides a model adapted to a democracy that faces a genuinely existential security threat and has developed a sophisticated security architecture to manage it. The Korean NSC includes the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister, the Director of National Intelligence, the Chair of the Joint Chiefs, and the National Security Advisor. It is distinguished by its practice of regular crisis simulation exercises, its integration with parliamentary oversight through regular briefings to the National Assembly Intelligence Committee, and its publication of annual national security assessments.

Indonesia's National Security body, the Dewan Ketahanan Nasional or National Resilience Council, reflects a different approach that draws on the Indonesian concept of national resilience, ketahanan nasional, which integrates military, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of security in a holistic framework. The Indonesian model is instructive for Bangladesh because it addresses a similar challenge of a large, complex, multi-ethnic society where security threats are not primarily conventional military threats but encompass social fragmentation, economic inequality, and transnational crime.

9.3 Draft Architecture for a Bangladesh National Security Council

A Bangladesh National Security Council, established by statute, should have the following architecture.

The NSC should be constituted as a statutory body whose establishment, composition, and functions are defined by a National Security Council Act. The Act should define the Council's mandate as providing strategic direction for national security policy, coordinating the activities of all government agencies with security functions, reviewing and updating the National Security Strategy, and advising the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister on significant security decisions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Council's permanent membership should include the Chief Adviser or Prime Minister, who chairs it; the Deputy Chief Adviser or Deputy Prime Minister; the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the Minister of Defence; the Minister of Home Affairs; and the Finance Minister. Its statutory advisers, without voting rights, should include the Chief of Army Staff, the Chief of Naval Staff, the Chief of Air Staff, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, the Director General of the NSI, and the Director General of the DGFI. This composition ensures that military and intelligence inputs are available to the Council's deliberations while maintaining civilian political authority over decisions.

The NSC should be supported by a National Security Secretariat within the Prime Minister's Office, headed by a National Security Advisor appointed by the Chief Adviser with the approval of the relevant parliamentary committee. The Secretariat should have the capacity to commission independent strategic assessments, coordinate interagency planning, maintain the National Security Strategy, and support the Council's oversight functions.

The NSC's relationship with Parliament should be formalized through requirements to provide the Parliamentary Defence Committee with an annual briefing on the national security situation, to submit the National Security Strategy to Parliament for debate every five years, and to consult with parliamentary leadership before making major strategic decisions with significant budgetary or policy implications.

CHAPTER TEN: THE ROHINGYA CRISIS, INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND BANGLADESH'S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

10.1 The Humanitarian Crisis as a Defense Policy Variable

The Rohingya crisis, which as of 2026 has resulted in approximately one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, representing the largest refugee camp complex in the world, is simultaneously a humanitarian catastrophe, a foreign policy challenge, a domestic political issue, and a defense and security problem of the first magnitude. Understanding how these dimensions interact, and how international law shapes Bangladesh's options, is essential for any serious defense policy analysis.

From the defense policy perspective, the Rohingya crisis creates several distinct security challenges. The presence of such a large number of displaced persons in a geographically concentrated area creates criminal enterprise opportunities, including recruitment by armed non-state groups, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and weapons smuggling, that require ongoing security responses from both the military and law enforcement agencies. The Arakan Army's control of significant portions of Myanmar's Rakhine State creates the possibility of direct military pressure on Bangladesh, particularly given the Arakan Army's demonstrated willingness to conduct operations across the Naf River border. And the crisis provides a terrain for proxy competition among regional and global powers, with India, China, the United States, and various

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

international organizations all having interests and policies that interact with Bangladesh's own approach.

The international law dimension of the Rohingya crisis is exceptionally complex and deserves systematic analysis. Bangladesh's obligations and rights under international refugee law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and the law of the sea all intersect in ways that constrain Bangladesh's policy options and create opportunities for legal advocacy that Bangladesh has so far not fully exploited.

10.2 Bangladesh's International Law Rights and Obligations

Under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, to which Bangladesh is not a party, the principle of non-refoulement, meaning the prohibition on returning refugees to a territory where they face serious risk of persecution, applies as customary international law binding on all states regardless of treaty ratification. This means that Bangladesh cannot legally forcibly repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar so long as the conditions that created the original flight persist, and the continued armed conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State clearly meets that threshold.

The ICJ proceedings initiated by the Gambia against Myanmar in November 2019 under the Genocide Convention, which resulted in the ICJ's January 2020 provisional measures order requiring Myanmar to take steps to prevent genocide and preserve evidence, are directly relevant to Bangladesh's legal position. Bangladesh is not a formal party to those proceedings, but as the state most directly affected by Myanmar's actions against the Rohingya, it has both an interest in the proceedings and potential access to the ICJ process through third-party intervention or through separate legal action. Bangladesh's legal advocacy regarding the Rohingya crisis has been generally passive, relying primarily on diplomatic and humanitarian channels. A more legally active approach, including possible participation in the ICJ proceedings and active engagement with the International Criminal Court's preliminary examination of Myanmar, would better serve Bangladesh's national interests.

The law of the sea dimension arises from Bangladesh's efforts to prevent Rohingya refugees from reaching Bangladesh by sea, which have resulted in documented incidents of pushback at sea that potentially violate the maritime dimension of the non-refoulement principle. The UN refugee agency UNHCR and various human rights organizations have documented these incidents and raised concerns about their compatibility with international law. Bangladesh's defense policy must grapple honestly with this tension: the security argument for maritime interception of refugee vessels, based on the concern that such vessels may be used to infiltrate armed groups or weapons, has some merit, but it cannot override the fundamental humanitarian obligation of non-refoulement.

10.3 The Myanmar Civil War and Its Defense Policy Implications for Bangladesh

The Myanmar civil war, which intensified dramatically following the February 2021 military coup and has evolved into one of the most complex and brutal conflicts in contemporary Asia, creates a direct defense policy challenge for Bangladesh that goes beyond the humanitarian

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

dimensions of the Rohingya crisis. The Arakan Army, the primary ethnic armed organization of the Rakhine people and the de facto governing authority in much of Rakhine State following its military successes against the Myanmar military junta, represents a new kind of border challenge: a non-state armed organization that controls territory on Bangladesh's border, has an ambiguous relationship with the Rohingya community, and has demonstrated both the military capability and the political willingness to conduct operations that affect Bangladesh's territory.

The Arakan Army's August 2024 capture of Maungdaw, the border town opposite Cox's Bazar, fundamentally changed the security geometry of Bangladesh's southeastern border. It means that Bangladesh now effectively shares a border with the Arakan Army, a non-state actor, rather than with the Myanmar state in that sector. This creates novel diplomatic and legal challenges: how does Bangladesh engage with a non-state actor that controls border territory, conduct border security cooperation, or address security incidents involving Arakan Army forces?

Bangladesh's defense policy response to this situation has been cautious and essentially reactive, which is understandable given the political complexity but increasingly inadequate given the changing ground situation. A proactive defense policy would address this challenge through several instruments: diplomatic engagement with the Arakan Army through appropriate channels; strengthening of border security forces and surveillance along the southeastern border; development of contingency plans for various scenarios of conflict escalation or spillover; and engagement with regional actors, particularly China which has significant influence with the Arakan Army, to promote dialogue and stability.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE FORCES GOAL 2030 REASSESSMENT AND THE 2026-2040 MODERNIZATION PLAN

11.1 Forces Goal 2030: Achievements, Gaps, and the Reform Imperative

Forces Goal 2030, Bangladesh's first formal military modernization framework, was launched in 2009 and revised in 2017 under the Hasina government. As analyzed in Part One and Part Two of this textbook, it created the historic groundwork for transforming the Bangladesh Armed Forces into a more sophisticated capability across all three services. As of 2026, that transformation has been substantially but incompletely achieved, and the post-revolution political environment has created both new pressures and new opportunities for the next phase of modernization.

The achievements of Forces Goal 2030 are genuine and significant. The Bangladesh Army has acquired Chinese VT-5 light tanks, the TRG-300 Tiger Multiple Launch Rocket System from Turkish manufacturer Roketsan, modern self-propelled artillery, and significant improvements to its electronic warfare and communications infrastructure. The Bangladesh Navy has acquired Chinese Type 035G submarines, Chinese and Korean frigates and corvettes, and the beginnings of a maritime patrol aviation capability. The Bangladesh Air Force has operated Chinese F-7

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

variants as its primary combat aircraft, with those aircraft now approaching end-of-life, and has taken significant steps toward acquiring a genuine fourth or fourth-plus generation combat capability.

The gaps that remain are equally significant. The Air Force's F-7 fleet is dangerously obsolescent, creating a capability gap that the ongoing acquisition process for multirole fighters, whether J-10CE, Eurofighter Typhoon, JF-17 Block III, or some combination, is designed to address but has not yet filled. The Navy's submarine force, while representing a historic capability acquisition, consists of aging platforms that require significant investment in crew training, maintenance infrastructure, and operational support to become genuinely capable. The Army's heavy mechanized capability remains limited relative to potential adversaries. And across all three services, the integration of systems, the development of joint doctrine, and the investment in command, control, communications, and intelligence infrastructure necessary for multi-domain operations remain inadequate.

11.2 The 75 Billion Dollar Question: The 2026-2040 Modernization Proposal

The proposed seventy-five billion dollar defense modernization program for Bangladesh spanning 2026 to 2040, described in analysis published by bdmilitary.com in June 2025, represents a vision of transformational change in Bangladesh's military capability that deserves careful analytical scrutiny. The proposal envisions a tri-service transformation with advanced network-centric warfare capabilities, strategic deterrence assets, and indigenous defense industrial development.

The strategic logic of the proposal is sound. Bangladesh's current military capability, while improved from the Forces Goal 2030 baseline, remains significantly below the capability required to provide credible deterrence against potential adversaries or to defend Bangladesh's expanded maritime interests in the Bay of Bengal. A sustained, multi-decade investment program is indeed necessary to close this gap. The forty to seventy-five billion dollar range of projected investment, spread over fifteen years, while enormous by historical standards, represents roughly three to six billion dollars per year, a significant increase over current spending but not inherently implausible for an economy of Bangladesh's scale and growth trajectory.

The critical analytical questions are not about the desirability of modernization but about the strategic prioritization, the procurement process quality, the industrial policy coherence, and the democratic accountability mechanisms that will govern a program of this scale.

On strategic prioritization, the proposal's tri-service balance makes sense in general terms, but the specific capability choices within each service are enormously consequential and deserve the kind of rigorous national security strategic review that Bangladesh has never formally conducted. The choice between fighter aircraft options, for example, is not merely a procurement decision. It is a statement about Bangladesh's strategic partnerships, its assessment of its principal security threats, and its long-term defense industrial strategy. The J-10CE is a technically capable platform, but it deepens Bangladesh's dependence on Chinese military technology and creates interoperability complications with potential Western partners. The Eurofighter Typhoon offers a

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Western capability with European alliance dimensions, but at significantly higher cost per unit and with different maintenance implications.

The three-tier fighter concept advanced by analysts at bdmilitary.com in January 2026, proposing a mix of twenty-four Eurofighter Typhoons, forty J-10CE aircraft, and forty-eight JF-17 Block III aircraft, is strategically interesting because it seeks to achieve both Western partnership (through Eurofighter) and cost efficiency (through the JF-17), while maintaining the Chinese relationship (through J-10CE), essentially implementing an air power version of strategic diversification. Whether this approach is operationally coherent, given the training, maintenance, and logistical complexity of operating three different fighter types from three different national supply chains, is a serious question that the proposal's proponents have not fully answered.

11.3 The Japan Defense Agreement of February 2026: Strategic Significance

The defense equipment and technology transfer agreement signed between Bangladesh and Japan on February 3, 2026, represents one of the most strategically significant partnership developments in Bangladesh's recent defense diplomacy. Japan's defense industrial base produces some of the world's most advanced defense technology, including maritime patrol aircraft, anti-submarine warfare systems, radar systems, and potentially maritime vessels. Japan's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, particularly its concern about Chinese maritime expansion and its deepened defense cooperation with India under the Quad framework, align in many respects with Bangladesh's own interest in maintaining a balance of power in the Bay of Bengal.

The agreement, signed in Dhaka by Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan, the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, and Japanese Ambassador Saida Shinichi, provides a framework for acquiring advanced systems, conducting joint research and development, and expanding military expert exchanges. Its practical significance will depend on what specific capabilities Bangladesh prioritizes within the framework, and whether the political will exists to invest in Japanese systems alongside Chinese ones in a way that genuinely diversifies rather than merely multiplies procurement relationships.

From a legal and policy perspective, the Japan agreement is a bilateral defense cooperation agreement of the kind that requires parliamentary notification and, for agreements involving specific procurement commitments, potentially parliamentary approval. The question of whether such agreements are properly subjected to parliamentary scrutiny in Bangladesh's current governance framework is relevant here: a government that signs significant defense agreements without parliamentary awareness or debate is failing the democratic accountability standard that genuine security sector reform requires.

11.4 The CETC Drone Manufacturing Agreement of January 2026

The agreement signed in January 2026 between the Bangladesh Air Force and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation International to establish a drone manufacturing and assembly facility in Bangladesh represents a different kind of partnership, one focused on technology transfer and indigenous production rather than procurement. If implemented effectively, it could

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

provide Bangladesh with a genuine unmanned aerial vehicle manufacturing capability that would serve both military and civilian purposes.

The strategic value of unmanned aerial vehicles in contemporary military operations has been dramatically illustrated by the Ukraine war, in which both sides have made extensive use of drones for reconnaissance, targeting, electronic warfare, and direct attack. Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 drones, discussed in Part Two of this textbook, have achieved remarkable operational results in multiple conflicts at a fraction of the cost of manned aircraft. Bangladesh's development of indigenous drone manufacturing capability would therefore represent a cost-effective and strategically meaningful addition to its military capability.

The legal framework governing this arrangement requires attention. Technology transfer agreements with foreign defense companies involve complex intellectual property, export control, and dual-use technology considerations that need to be addressed in the contractual framework. CETC International, as a subsidiary of one of China's major state-owned defense electronics companies, is subject to both Chinese export control law and the foreign investment security review requirements of recipient countries. Whether Bangladesh has the institutional capacity and legal framework to manage these dimensions of the agreement effectively is an important question that the procurement and technology transfer legislation discussed earlier in this part would need to address.

CHAPTER TWELVE: HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND DEFENSE POLICY: THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

12.1 International Human Rights Law and Armed Forces Conduct

Bangladesh's obligations under international human rights law create binding constraints on the conduct of its armed forces and security agencies that are directly relevant to defense policy design and implementation. Understanding these obligations, their legal basis, their specific content, and the accountability mechanisms that enforce them is essential for any defense policy that aspires to legal legitimacy.

Bangladesh has ratified the major international human rights instruments. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 2000, creates binding obligations regarding the right to life, freedom from torture, the right to liberty and security of person, fair trial rights, freedom of thought and expression, and the right to an effective remedy for violations. The Convention Against Torture, ratified in 1998, creates specific obligations regarding the prohibition of torture and cruel treatment, the requirement to criminalize torture, the non-refoulement principle as applied to torture, and the obligation to investigate allegations of torture. The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which Bangladesh has signed but not yet ratified, would create additional

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

obligations directly relevant to the documented pattern of enforced disappearances involving military and intelligence personnel.

The ICCPR's Human Rights Committee, in its General Comment 36 on the right to life adopted in 2018, has articulated the most comprehensive current statement of states' obligations under Article 6 of the ICCPR. The General Comment establishes that states must take all necessary measures to prevent, punish, investigate, and redress arbitrary deprivations of life; that this obligation applies to the conduct of all state officials including military and intelligence personnel; that the use of lethal force by security forces must be regulated by law, must be strictly necessary and proportionate, must be subject to effective oversight and accountability; and that the practice of extrajudicial or summary execution in any form violates the right to life.

Bangladesh's documented failure to meet these obligations, as established by the OHCHR fact-finding report, the HRW report, and numerous other credible sources, represents a significant legal liability and a genuine threat to Bangladesh's international relationships and reputation. The ICJ order regarding Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya has established the principle that international courts are willing to engage with state responsibility for mass atrocity crimes in the South Asian context, and this creates a theoretical legal risk for Bangladesh in respect of security force conduct that a serious government should address.

12.2 The Accountability Imperative: Transitional Justice and Forward-Looking Reform

The accountability for past human rights violations by Bangladesh's security forces creates both an ethical obligation and a practical governance challenge. The ethical obligation is clear: individuals who were unlawfully killed, disappeared, tortured, or detained by security force personnel are entitled to recognition of the wrongs done to them, accountability of the perpetrators, and reparations consistent with international standards. This is not merely a matter of international law compliance. It is a fundamental question of the democratic legitimacy of the state.

The practical governance challenge is that accountability processes, if poorly designed or politically manipulated, can destabilize the security sector and undermine the effectiveness of the reform program. Security force personnel who fear prosecution for past conduct may resist reform rather than embrace it. The military's institutional response to the October 2025 arrest warrants against sixteen officers, while formally compliant in taking the officers into military custody, suggests that the balance between accountability and institutional stability is actively contested.

The transitional justice literature provides useful analytical frameworks for navigating this challenge. The concept of the "accountability gap," developed by scholars including Ruti Teitel and Naomi Roht-Arriaza, describes the risk that transitional justice processes are designed precisely wide enough to be visible but narrow enough not to threaten those with significant institutional power. Bangladesh's current accountability processes, which have targeted some officers but have not engaged systematically with the command responsibility of senior military and intelligence officials, risk falling into this accountability gap.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The optimal framework for Bangladesh combines several complementary mechanisms. Criminal accountability through the civilian courts, for the most serious violations, including enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, and torture, should proceed on the basis of individual criminal responsibility established through fair trial procedures. An independent truth-seeking process, modeled on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission but adapted to Bangladesh's circumstances, could document the full scope of violations, establish an authoritative historical record, and identify systemic reforms necessary to prevent recurrence. Administrative vetting of security force personnel, requiring individuals with documented involvement in serious violations to be removed from service, should be conducted through a fair and transparent process. And reparations for victims, including compensation, rehabilitation, and symbolic recognition, should be established through a statutory scheme.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE DIPLOMACY-DEFENSE NEXUS: BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

13.1 The 2026 Strategic Landscape: Bangladesh as a Networked Security Actor

A February 2026 analysis in 9dashline observed that Bangladesh no longer intends to operate as a peripheral state within an India-centric security order in South Asia, but as a globally connected security actor seeking to maximize strategic autonomy over its procurement choices, maritime posture, and regional role. This observation captures a fundamental shift in Bangladesh's strategic orientation that has accelerated dramatically since the July 2024 revolution.

The shift is visible across multiple dimensions. In defense procurement, Bangladesh has moved simultaneously toward China for the J-10CE fighter acquisition, toward Italy and Europe for the Eurofighter option, toward Japan for the February 2026 defense technology transfer agreement, toward Turkey for air defense systems and unmanned systems technology, and toward the United States for training and interoperability. This multi-directional procurement strategy is an operationalization of the "friendship with all, malice toward none" foreign policy principle, applied to defense relationships.

In maritime posture, Bangladesh has been gradually but visibly asserting its presence and interests in the Bay of Bengal, including through the commissioning of locally built maritime vessels, the deployment of naval assets on extended patrols, and diplomatic engagement with the Indian Ocean Rim Association and other maritime forums. The Bay of Bengal is increasingly recognized as a central strategic space in the Indo-Pacific competition, and Bangladesh's geographic position at the head of the Bay gives it both vulnerability and opportunity.

In its regional role, Bangladesh's experience as the world's largest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping, examined in Part One, gives it a form of international legitimacy and a security policy tool that most states of comparable size do not possess. Bangladesh's continued active

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

participation in peacekeeping, even as it modernizes its military for territorial defense, reflects a strategic judgment that the reputational and diplomatic benefits of peacekeeping participation justify its costs.

13.2 The India-Bangladesh Strategic Equation After the July Revolution

The India-Bangladesh relationship is the central strategic variable in Bangladesh's security environment, and the July Revolution fundamentally altered the terms of that relationship. The Hasina government had developed a very close, almost dependent relationship with New Delhi, which provided the Hasina government with substantial political protection and facilitated Indian infrastructure and energy projects in Bangladesh in exchange for security cooperation that served Indian interests, including the use of Bangladesh's territory and facilities to address India's concerns about groups operating from Bangladesh.

The Yunus interim government began from a much more arm's-length relationship with India. New Delhi was clearly uneasy about the revolution that toppled its closest Bangladeshi partner, and the early months of the Yunus government were characterized by visible friction in the bilateral relationship. Bangladesh declined to extradite Sheikh Hasina, who had fled to India, and several of the reform measures pursued by the interim government touched on areas of the bilateral relationship that India regarded as sensitive.

By late 2025 and early 2026, the relationship had stabilized, with both sides recognizing the importance of the structural economic and security ties that bind Bangladesh and India regardless of political personalities. India is Bangladesh's largest trading partner, the principal source of energy imports, and the geographic reality that dominates Bangladesh's strategic geography. No Bangladeshi government of any political color can afford to treat the India relationship as expendable.

But the post-revolution recalibration of the India-Bangladesh relationship has created an opportunity to place that relationship on a more equal and legally grounded basis. The negotiation of a comprehensive framework agreement governing the bilateral security relationship, with clear terms on intelligence cooperation, border security, transit and connectivity, and the management of the major rivers, would serve Bangladesh's interests better than the informal, patron-client arrangements that characterized the Hasina-Modi relationship. The legal framework for bilateral security relationships, including the treaty-making process under international and domestic law, is directly relevant to defense policy design.

13.3 Legal Architecture of Defense Partnerships: Bilateral and Multilateral Frameworks

Bangladesh's defense partnerships are currently governed by a mix of bilateral defense cooperation agreements, memoranda of understanding, status of forces agreements, and informal arrangements that have developed over time without consistent legal architecture. A comprehensive review and rationalization of this legal architecture would serve both Bangladesh's strategic interests and its democratic governance requirements.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The status of forces agreement, or SOFA, is the foundational legal instrument governing the presence of foreign military personnel in Bangladesh and of Bangladeshi personnel in foreign countries for training and cooperation purposes. Bangladesh has SOFA-type agreements with the United States and several other countries that define the legal status of visiting military personnel, the jurisdiction applicable to offenses committed by those personnel, and the logistical and administrative arrangements for their presence. These agreements deserve review to ensure that they adequately protect Bangladesh's jurisdictional sovereignty and that they are consistent with Bangladesh's constitutional and legal framework.

The broader defense cooperation agreement framework should be reviewed to ensure that each agreement is consistent with Bangladesh's constitutional requirements for international treaty-making, that it is subject to appropriate parliamentary notification or approval procedures, and that it reflects Bangladesh's current strategic priorities rather than the priorities of governments that are no longer in office. Several of the defense cooperation agreements signed during the Hasina era, particularly those involving intelligence sharing with India, may require renegotiation in light of the changed political environment and the documented misuse of those relationships for political surveillance.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND DEFENSE OVERSIGHT: DETAILED LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

14.1 The Theory of Parliamentary Defense Oversight

Parliamentary oversight of defense is one of the most demanding challenges in democratic governance. It requires legislators to engage with a domain characterized by technical complexity, operational secrecy, professional culture that resists external scrutiny, and political sensitivities that can make robust oversight appear unpatriotic. Yet without genuine parliamentary oversight, the democratic accountability of the defense sector is hollow, and the principal-agent problems discussed in Chapter One of this part multiply without check.

The theoretical foundations of parliamentary defense oversight are grounded in the basic principles of democratic constitutionalism. The legislature's authority to enact law, appropriate funds, and call the executive to account is the foundational mechanism of democratic governance, and this authority must extend fully to the defense domain if the constitutional order is to be meaningful. An executive that can spend public money, develop weapons capabilities, engage in intelligence operations, and use military force without parliamentary authorization or oversight is not operating within a constitutional framework in any meaningful sense.

The theory of legislative oversight distinguishes between three types of oversight activity. Ex ante oversight, oversight before the fact, involves the legislature in the authorization of activities before they occur, through legislation defining mandates and limits, through budget appropriations, and through advance notification requirements. Concurrent oversight involves

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

ongoing legislative engagement with executive activities as they unfold, through committee hearings, information requests, and site visits. Ex post oversight involves legislative review of completed activities, through audit, investigation, and evaluation of outcomes.

Effective parliamentary defense oversight requires all three types. Ex ante oversight ensures that the legislature, rather than the executive alone, sets the strategic framework within which the defense establishment operates. Concurrent oversight ensures that the legislature can identify problems and require corrective action before irreversible harm is done. Ex post oversight ensures accountability and institutional learning that reduces the likelihood of future failures.

14.2 The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence: A Detailed Reform Proposal

Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence requires fundamental reform to become a genuine oversight body rather than a pro forma institution. The reform required operates on five dimensions: mandate, composition, resources, access, and authority.

On mandate, the committee's terms of reference should be updated to explicitly include the authority to examine all aspects of defense policy, including classified programs; to conduct investigations on its own initiative as well as in response to government referrals; to call witnesses from any part of the defense establishment, including serving military officers and intelligence officials; to commission independent technical assessments of defense programs; and to produce reports and recommendations that the government is required to respond to within a defined period.

On composition, the committee should include members with relevant expertise in defense, international security, law, and public finance. The current practice of purely partisan appointment to the committee, which means that its composition reflects the balance of political parties rather than relevant expertise, should be supplemented by a requirement for at least a minority of committee members with defense or security professional backgrounds. The committee chair should be appointed by Parliament rather than by the government, following the UK practice for select committees, to ensure genuine independence from the executive.

On resources, the committee should have a permanent, professional staff with security clearances appropriate to access classified information. This staff should include defense analysts, lawyers with national security expertise, and financial specialists capable of conducting meaningful audit of defense expenditure. The current situation in which the committee relies entirely on information provided by the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Division, without independent analytical capacity to evaluate that information, makes genuine oversight impossible.

On access, the committee should have the statutory right to examine all defense budget documentation, including classified annexes, in closed session with appropriate security protocols. It should have the right to visit any defense installation, with advance notice except in genuine emergency situations. It should have the right to interview any defense official,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

including serving officers and intelligence personnel, either in open session or in closed session as appropriate. And it should have the right to commission the Defense Inspectorate to conduct specific investigations and report back to the committee.

On authority, the committee should have the power to require the government to respond in writing to committee reports within sixty days; to refer potential violations of law to the appropriate prosecutorial authorities; and to seek judicial review of government decisions to withhold information from the committee on national security grounds, with the court conducting a private examination of the withheld information to determine whether the national security claim is genuine or pretextual.

14.3 The Budget and Appropriations Process: A Legislative Reform Agenda

The defense budget process in Bangladesh requires fundamental reform to make defense spending genuinely accountable to democratic oversight. The current practice of presenting the defense budget to Parliament as a single appropriation with minimal detail, with classified procurement financed through separate credit arrangements that are not subject to parliamentary appropriation at all, is inconsistent with the constitutional principle of parliamentary financial sovereignty.

A reformed defense budget process should require the Ministry of Defence to present a defense budget document that includes, in open session, all non-classified expenditure items with sufficient detail to allow meaningful parliamentary scrutiny; a summary of classified programs with total costs and key parameters but without operationally sensitive details, available to the Parliamentary Defence Committee in closed session; and a separate appropriation for each major procurement program above a defined threshold, requiring separate parliamentary approval for each such program.

Major defense acquisitions, defined as acquisitions exceeding one billion taka, should require notification to the Parliamentary Defence Committee before contract signing, with the committee having a period of twenty-one days to request additional information or raise concerns before the contract is finalized. For acquisitions exceeding ten billion taka, the committee should have a formal role in the approval process, with the government required to consider and publicly respond to committee concerns before finalizing the acquisition.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh should be empowered and resourced to conduct specialized audits of defense expenditure, including classified programs reviewed in secure conditions, and to report findings to Parliament. The current practice of treating defense expenditure as a largely audit-free zone is incompatible with both constitutional principle and practical governance requirements.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: TOWARD A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

15.1 What a National Security Strategy Is and What It Should Contain

A National Security Strategy is a publicly available document that articulates a government's assessment of the security environment, defines the national interests that security policy seeks to protect, establishes strategic priorities for security resources and activities, and provides the overarching framework within which more specific defense, intelligence, and foreign policy documents are situated. It is the supreme document in the security policy hierarchy, situated above the Defense White Paper, the Military Strategy, the Intelligence Assessment, and the specific operational plans that implement strategic guidance.

Most of the world's serious security powers produce regular National Security Strategies. The United States NSS process, established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, requires the President to submit a National Security Strategy to Congress annually. The UK produces a National Security Strategy every five years, aligned with a Strategic Defence and Security Review. France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and most OECD members produce equivalent documents under various names. Even smaller states, including many in Bangladesh's peer group such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, have developed national security policy frameworks that serve a similar organizing function.

Bangladesh has never produced a National Security Strategy. This absence is one of the most significant structural deficiencies in Bangladesh's defense governance framework, because it means that the overarching framework for relating specific policy choices to fundamental national interests does not exist. Each defense procurement decision, each diplomatic partnership, each intelligence operation occurs in a strategic vacuum without a publicly articulated sense of what Bangladesh is ultimately trying to achieve in the security domain.

15.2 The Content of a Bangladesh National Security Strategy: A Detailed Framework

A Bangladesh National Security Strategy, drawing on the analytical framework developed throughout Parts One, Two, and Three of this textbook, should address the following core elements.

The Strategy should begin with a statement of Bangladesh's national interests in the security domain. These include the defense of sovereignty and territorial integrity, including in the maritime domain; the protection of citizens from threats both internal and external; the maintenance of a stable regional environment conducive to economic development; the defense of the constitutional order against both external aggression and internal subversion; and the protection of Bangladesh's people and assets overseas. Stating these interests explicitly creates a basis for evaluating policy choices: does a given defense investment, partnership, or operation advance or undermine these interests?

The Strategy should then provide an honest assessment of the security environment, acknowledging both threats and opportunities. The threats include the conventional military capabilities of large neighbors, particularly the profound asymmetry between Bangladesh's military capability and India's; the instability and armed conflict in Myanmar with its spillover

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

effects on Bangladesh; the non-traditional threats of terrorism, transnational crime, cyber attack, and climate-induced instability; and the gray zone and hybrid threats from state actors who might seek to use non-military instruments to influence Bangladesh's policy choices.

The opportunities include Bangladesh's growing economic power and the strategic leverage that provides; its central position in the Bay of Bengal at a moment when that maritime space is becoming increasingly important in global strategic competition; its diplomatic capital from UN peacekeeping; and its established relationships with a wide range of major powers, none of which dominates Bangladesh's security calculus.

The Strategy should then establish strategic priorities for the next five years. Drawing on the threat assessment, these priorities should include: modernizing the armed forces to provide credible conventional deterrence, with a specific focus on maritime domain awareness and air defense as the highest-priority capability gaps; developing robust cyber defense and intelligence capabilities; strengthening the legal and institutional framework for democratic defense governance, including the legislative reforms outlined in this part; advancing the indigenous defense industrial base to reduce strategic dependence on external suppliers; and developing the NSC and strategic planning machinery necessary for effective security policy coordination.

The Strategy should conclude with a resource framework that translates strategic priorities into budgetary guidance. This does not require the disclosure of classified budget details in the open document, but it should establish the general resource envelope available for security purposes and the priority order within which resources will be allocated.

15.3 The National Security Policy Process: From Strategy to Implementation

A National Security Strategy document, however well crafted, achieves nothing unless it is connected to effective implementation mechanisms. The gap between strategic aspiration and operational reality is one of the most consistent findings in the comparative study of defense policy, and Bangladesh's own experience illustrates it: Forces Goal 2030 established ambitious modernization objectives that were only partially realized, partly because of funding shortfalls and partly because the institutional machinery for translating strategic priorities into specific programs was inadequate.

The implementation of a National Security Strategy requires a strategic planning process that connects the strategic document to specific program decisions, budget allocations, and operational directives. This process should be coordinated by the National Security Secretariat under NSC authority, and it should produce a series of more specific implementing documents. The Defense White Paper translates strategic priorities into defense-specific force structure, capability, and posture guidance. The National Intelligence Priorities Framework translates strategic priorities into guidance for intelligence collection and analysis. The Foreign Policy White Paper translates strategic priorities into diplomatic objectives and engagement frameworks.

The review process is equally important. A National Security Strategy should be reviewed annually to assess progress against its objectives and to adjust priorities in light of changed

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

circumstances. A formal five-year Strategic Defence and Security Review should conduct a comprehensive reassessment of the strategy against the evolving security environment, the effectiveness of policies implemented under the previous strategy, and the resource situation. Both the annual review and the five-year strategic review should involve parliamentary engagement, ensuring that the democratic accountability principle extends to the implementation of strategic guidance and not merely to its original articulation.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: JURISPRUDENTIAL CONTROVERSIES IN SECURITY LAW: DEEPER ANALYSIS

16.1 The Emergency Powers Controversy: Balancing Security and Constitutionalism

Emergency powers law is the most philosophically contested area of constitutional design in any democracy, because it represents the explicit acknowledgment that constitutional governance may sometimes require departure from normal constitutional rules. The theoretical tension is captured in what legal theorists call the "Schmitt problem," after Carl Schmitt's controversial argument in Political Theology that "sovereign is he who decides on the exception," meaning that the existence of emergency powers reveals that constitutional law is ultimately subordinate to political will rather than the other way around.

The liberal constitutional response to the Schmitt problem has been to argue that emergency powers, while unavoidable, must be constitutionally bounded in ways that preserve the rule of law even during emergencies. This response, associated with thinkers such as Bruce Ackerman, Kim Lane Scheppele, and Oren Gross, has generated a rich debate about the proper design of emergency powers provisions that is directly relevant to Bangladesh's constitutional situation.

Bangladesh's emergency powers framework, as established in Articles 141A through 141C of the Constitution, has historically been applied in ways that reflect Schmitt's critique rather than the liberal constitutional response. The emergency proclaimed in January 2007, which accompanied the military-backed caretaker government, effectively suspended parliamentary democracy for nearly two years under emergency powers provisions. The emergency of 2007-2008, while nominally aimed at addressing political corruption and restoring democratic order, demonstrated how emergency powers can be used not to preserve the constitutional order but to restructure it in ways that serve the interests of those controlling the emergency.

The reform of Bangladesh's emergency powers framework should address several specific design features. The conditions for proclaiming a state of emergency should be defined with greater specificity than the current "imminent danger" formulation, drawing on comparative experience with better-defined triggers such as external armed attack, serious internal disturbance threatening constitutional order, or natural disaster of catastrophic scale. The parliamentary

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

authorization requirement for emergencies should be strengthened to require a supermajority rather than a simple majority, making politically motivated emergencies harder to sustain. The rights that remain protected during emergencies, the non-derogable rights, should be specified more comprehensively, at minimum aligning with the ICCPR's list of non-derogable rights. And independent judicial review of emergency declarations should be available without suspension.

16.2 The Proportionality Principle and Its Application to Security Law

The proportionality principle, which requires that the means used to achieve a legitimate security objective must be proportionate to the importance of that objective and must not impose burdens on individuals' rights that are excessive relative to the benefit achieved, is one of the most important principles in modern constitutional and international law. It has been applied by constitutional courts across the world, by the European Court of Human Rights, by the UN Human Rights Committee, and by international criminal tribunals, and it provides the most important analytical framework for evaluating the legality of security force conduct.

The proportionality analysis in security law involves three sequential tests. First, suitability: is the measure actually capable of achieving the stated security objective? Second, necessity: is there a less rights-restrictive means of achieving the same objective? Third, proportionality stricto sensu: is the benefit of the security measure, assessed in terms of the security objective achieved, proportionate to the cost in terms of rights infringement?

The application of proportionality analysis to Bangladesh's security law reveals multiple areas of concern. The provisions allowing indefinite detention without charge under the Special Powers Act 1974, which remains on the statute books despite being a notorious instrument of political detention, fail the proportionality test on all three counts: detention without charge is not an effective means of addressing most security threats; less rights-restrictive alternatives, such as supervised bail with reporting conditions, are available; and the deprivation of liberty is not proportionate to the speculative security benefit.

The use of lethal force by security forces in situations that do not involve an immediate threat to life similarly fails the proportionality test when assessed against the documented pattern of deaths during protest situations. The proportionality principle is not merely an academic criterion. It is a binding legal standard under both Bangladesh's constitutional law, through the fundamental rights provisions, and its international human rights law obligations. Its systematic violation by security forces is a major area of legal liability and reform urgency.

16.3 Legal Pluralism and the Challenge of Governing Security in a Multi-Normative Environment

Bangladesh's legal system operates not as a unified normative order but as a plurality of intersecting and sometimes competing normative frameworks. Constitutional law, statutory law, customary law, personal status law drawing on Islamic jurisprudence, and the normative frameworks of international law and international humanitarian law all apply to different aspects of security governance and sometimes generate conflicting obligations or permissions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The concept of legal pluralism, developed by scholars including John Griffiths, Brian Tamanaha, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, describes this condition and raises important questions about how to manage normative conflicts in ways that maintain both social order and human rights. For security governance, the most significant legal pluralism challenges arise at two intersections.

The first is the intersection between constitutional law and Islamic jurisprudence in the area of security detention and trial procedures. The 1972 Constitution does not establish Islamic law as the basis of state law, despite the constitutional amendment designating Islam as the state religion, and fundamental rights provisions apply uniformly regardless of religious affiliation. But in the cultural and political environment of Bangladesh, Islamic normative frameworks influence popular expectations about criminal justice and security policy in ways that any serious reform program must engage honestly rather than simply dismiss.

The second is the intersection between domestic security law and international law. Bangladesh has ratified multiple international human rights treaties that impose specific obligations on its security governance. When domestic legislation conflicts with treaty obligations, international law requires that treaty obligations prevail, at least in the international law framework. But Bangladesh's domestic legal system does not automatically incorporate international treaty obligations into domestic law, requiring implementing legislation, and the political will to pass such legislation has historically been limited.

A comprehensive security law reform program must engage with both of these legal pluralism challenges. In respect of the domestic-international law intersection, this means systematically reviewing Bangladesh's security legislation against its treaty obligations and enacting the implementing legislation necessary to bring domestic law into compliance. In respect of the constitutional-Islamic jurisprudence intersection, it means engaging openly with Islamic legal scholarship to demonstrate that the rights-based framework of democratic security governance is consistent with Islamic principles of justice, accountability, and the protection of human dignity, principles that are not foreign to the Islamic tradition but deeply embedded within it.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: SYNTHESIS AND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

17.1 The Legislative Reform Agenda: A Comprehensive Summary

This part of the textbook has developed a comprehensive legislative reform agenda for Bangladesh's defense governance. Drawing together the analysis across all preceding chapters, the agenda may be organized into four priority levels.

The first priority level, representing the most urgent reforms whose absence creates the most serious governance failures, includes the following legislative actions. First, the enactment of a National Defense Act establishing the legal character of the armed forces, the command authority structure, the conditions for deployment, and the oversight mechanisms necessary for

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

democratic accountability. Second, the enactment of an Intelligence Oversight Act establishing statutory charters for each intelligence agency, defining their powers and limitations, creating parliamentary oversight mechanisms, requiring judicial authorization for intrusive intelligence activities, and establishing remedies for unlawful intelligence action. Third, the enactment of a Domestic Military Deployment Act establishing the conditions, authorization procedures, rules of engagement, and accountability mechanisms for military deployment in internal security roles. Fourth, comprehensive reform of the military justice system through either amendment of the existing service acts or enactment of a comprehensive Military Justice Act.

The second priority level, representing important reforms whose absence creates significant governance weaknesses, includes the following. First, the enactment of a National Security Council Act establishing the NSC on a statutory basis with defined composition, mandate, and relationship to Parliament. Second, the enactment of a Defense Procurement Act establishing competitive procurement requirements, parliamentary oversight of major acquisitions, independent audit functions, and anti-corruption provisions. Third, the amendment of the Parliamentary Standing Orders to strengthen the mandate, resources, and access of the Parliamentary Defence Committee.

The third priority level, representing important reforms for the medium term, includes the following. First, the development and publication of a National Security Strategy providing the overarching framework for all security policy. Second, the reform of emergency powers provisions through constitutional amendment to strengthen the conditions, authorization requirements, rights protections, and judicial review mechanisms applicable to states of emergency. Third, the enactment of a Reserve Forces Act establishing the legal framework for a significantly expanded and better-trained reserve force.

The fourth priority level, representing longer-term institutional development objectives, includes the following. First, the development of a Defense Economic Zone governance framework that ensures effective industrial policy, technology transfer protection, and procurement integrity. Second, the development of a Cyber Defense Act integrating the Cyber Safety Ordinance 2025's provisions with specific military cyber defense and operations authorities. Third, the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the implementation of its domestic obligations.

17.2 The Political Economy of Reform: Why Reform Is Hard and How to Make It Happen

Understanding why security sector reform is persistently difficult requires honest engagement with the political economy of the reform process. Legislative reform in the security domain threatens powerful institutional interests: armed forces that benefit from unconstrained authority, intelligence agencies that benefit from operational secrecy without oversight, political actors who benefit from informal relationships with security institutions, and defense industry interests that benefit from procurement processes without competitive discipline.

The political economy literature on reform in developing democracies, drawing on work by scholars including Douglass North, Barry Weingast, and Daron Acemoglu, emphasizes that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sustainable reform requires not just legislative enactment but the construction of coalitions of interest that will sustain the new institutional arrangements against the resistance of those who benefit from the status quo. In the security domain, this means building coalitions among civil society organizations, legal and academic communities, international partners, and reform-minded elements within the security institutions themselves.

The post-July Revolution political environment in Bangladesh represents the most favorable context for this coalition-building that the country has experienced in decades. The student and civil society movements that drove the revolution have demonstrated their capacity for mass mobilization around governance reform principles. International partners, including the UN system, major donor governments, and human rights organizations, have provided significant support for reform. And within the security institutions themselves, there are reform-minded professionals who recognize that genuine democratic accountability is in the long-term institutional interest of the armed forces, even if it threatens specific individual interests.

The reform window created by this moment will not remain open indefinitely. The February 2026 elections mark the transition from interim governance to elected government, and the new government will face its own political pressures and institutional constraints. The agenda developed in this part needs to be translated into specific legislative proposals that can be introduced in the new Parliament and built into the institutional agenda of the new government from the first days of its operation.

The most important single piece of advice that this analysis can offer to those engaged in the reform process is this: begin with the National Defense Act. It is the foundational instrument from which all other reforms flow. Without it, the intelligence oversight framework has no legal basis in a defined security architecture. The military justice reform has no constitutional anchor. The domestic deployment law has no broader legislative framework within which to operate. The parliamentary oversight mechanisms have no statutory foundation to compel access and accountability. The National Defense Act is the keystone of the arch, and without it the other reforms cannot hold their shape.

CONCLUSION TO PART THREE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

The argument of this part may be stated simply: Bangladesh's security governance failures are fundamentally failures of legal and institutional design, and those failures can be addressed through comprehensive legislative reform. This is not to say that law is sufficient on its own. Cultural change within security institutions, sustained political will from elected governments, capacity development within oversight bodies, and the engagement of civil society are all necessary complements to legislative reform. But without the legal foundation, these other elements have nothing to anchor them.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The comprehensive legislative agenda developed in this part, centered on the National Defense Act and supported by intelligence oversight legislation, military justice reform, domestic deployment law, procurement reform, and the NSC statutory framework, provides a blueprint for transforming Bangladesh's security governance from a system characterized by impunity, opacity, and politicized capture to one characterized by legal accountability, transparency within the limits of genuine security requirements, and democratic control.

This transformation will not happen overnight. The institutional habits of half a century do not yield to a single parliamentary session. The interests threatened by genuine reform are powerful and persistent. The technical complexity of the issues involved is demanding. But the direction is clear, the tools are available, and the moment is propitious. Bangladesh has an opportunity in 2026 that it cannot afford to squander.

The philosophical foundation of this entire argument is the insight, developed in Part One of this textbook from the traditions of Locke, Kant, and the democratic constitutionalists who built upon their work, that the legitimacy of security institutions in a democratic state derives not from their military effectiveness alone but from their accountability to the people in whose name they act. A defense force that cannot be held accountable to democratic law is not a defender of sovereignty. It is a source of sovereignty's erosion. The fundamental purpose of the legislative reform agenda developed in this part is to ensure that Bangladesh's security institutions are genuine defenders of the constitutional order rather than its most threatening exception.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART THREE

Primary Sources and Official Documents

Bangladesh, Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (1972, as amended). Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Publications.

Bangladesh, Army Act 1952. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Publications.

Bangladesh, Public Procurement Act 2006. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Publications.

Bangladesh, Cyber Safety Ordinance 2025. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Publications, Bangladesh Gazette Extraordinary.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies and Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. Conference Report: Security Sector Reform: Challenges, Opportunities, and Pathways Forward. Dhaka: BIPSS-DCAF, December 2025.

Human Rights Watch. After the Monsoon Revolution: A Roadmap to Lasting Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh. New York: Human Rights Watch, January 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Bangladesh: July-August 2024 Uprising. Geneva: OHCHR, February 2025.

National Citizen Party. Manifesto of Youth and Dignity. Dhaka: NCP, January 2026.

Forces Goal 2030 Documentation. Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh. Various dates.

International and Comparative Legal Sources

Australia, Defence Act 1903 (Cth), as amended.

Canada, National Defence Act, RSC 1985, c. N-5, as amended.

European Court of Human Rights. Findlay v. United Kingdom, Application 22107/93, Judgment 25 February 1997.

Germany, Basic Law (Grundgesetz), Article 87a (Armed Forces) and Article 45b (Parliamentary Commissioner).

South Africa, Defence Act No. 42 of 2002.

Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

United Kingdom, Intelligence Services Act 1994 and Justice and Security Act 2013.

United Nations. Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. Adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, 1990.

United Nations Human Rights Committee. General Comment No. 36 on Article 6 (Right to Life) of the ICCPR. CCPR/C/GC/36, October 2018.

Academic Sources

Ackerman, Bruce. Before the Next Attack: Preserving Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012.

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Second edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.

De Sousa Santos, Boaventura. Toward a New Legal Common Sense: Law, Globalization, and Emancipation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Dipu, Ahmad M. Rethinking Bangladesh's National Defense Policy in the Wake of the Students-People's Uprising. SSRN Working Paper 5584990, February 2025 (revised January 2026).

Gross, Oren and Fionnuala Ni Aolain. Law in Times of Crisis: Emergency Powers in Theory and Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Gusy, Christoph. Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Services. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019.

Herz, John. "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma." World Politics 2, no. 2 (1950): 157-80.

Huntington, Samuel P. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Janowitz, Morris. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

North, Douglass, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry Weingast. Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Roht-Arriaza, Naomi and Javier Mariezcurrena, editors. Transitional Justice in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Truth versus Justice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Schiff, Rebecca. The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Scheppele, Kim Lane. "Law in a Time of Emergency: States of Exception and the Temptations of 9/11." University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law 6, no. 5 (2004): 1001-1083.

Schmitt, Carl. Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 (orig. 1922).

Teitel, Ruti. Transitional Justice. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Transparency International Defence and Security. Government Defence Integrity Index: Bangladesh Assessment. London: TI-DS, 2020.

Recent Analytical Sources (2024-2026)

9dashline. "Bangladesh's Defence Diversification and Pivot to Networked Security." February 2026. Available at: https://www.9dashline.com

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh Defence Journal. "Bangladesh's Defense Budget and Purchases at a Glance." December 2025. Available at: https://defencejournalbd.com

bdmilitary.com. "Bangladesh's Seventy-Five Billion Dollar Defence Modernisation Proposal 2026-2040." June 2025.

bdmilitary.com. "Bangladesh to Reform DGFI, Strengthen Focus on External Threats." October 2025.

bdmilitary.com. "NCP Manifesto Proposes UAV Brigade, Expanded Reserves and Intelligence Sector Reforms." January 2026.

bdmilitary.com. "A Three-Tier Air Force for Bangladesh: Why EFT, J-10CE and JF-17 Block III Actually Make Sense." January 2026.

Defence News. "Bangladesh Air Force Gets Nod to Spend Billions on Multirole Fighters." October 2025.

The Diplomat. "Revisiting Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh's Military Modernization Plan Under the New Government." December 2024.

The Daily Star. "Key Legislative Reforms of 2025 in Bangladesh." January 2026.

Wikipedia. "Forces Goal 2030." Updated February 2026.

End of Part Three

Part Four will address the operational dimensions of Bangladesh's defense policy, including military doctrine development, force structure design, joint operations theory, and the specific capability requirements of multi-domain defense in the Bay of Bengal strategic environment.

Part Four: Military Doctrine, Force Structure, Operational Theory, and the Architecture of Twenty-First Century Defense Capability

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART FOUR

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Parts One through Three of this textbook built the philosophical, historical, comparative, and legislative architecture of a comprehensive Bangladesh defense policy. Part One established the intellectual foundations: the philosophy of defense, national security theory, geopolitics, constitutional law, and jurisprudence. Part Two applied the comparative method to the experiences of states from which Bangladesh has the most to learn: Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Israel, Singapore, and Finland, examining how each translated strategic theory into concrete policy and capability. Part Three descended into the legislative arena, developing in granular detail the reform agenda necessary to place Bangladesh's security governance on a genuinely democratic foundation, from the National Defense Act through intelligence oversight law to procurement reform and the National Security Council.

Part Four now enters the operational domain: the theory and practice of how military forces are actually designed, organized, equipped, trained, and employed in the service of national strategy. This is the domain of military doctrine, and it is at once the most technical and the most politically consequential of the domains examined in this textbook. Military doctrine translates strategic objectives into operational concepts. Force structure translates operational concepts into organizational reality. Capability development translates organizational requirements into specific systems, platforms, and technologies. Each of these translation steps involves not just technical choices but political decisions about priorities, resources, partnerships, and risks.

The urgency of this analysis for Bangladesh is acute. The Bangladesh Armed Forces stand at a genuine doctrinal crossroads in 2026. Forces Goal 2030, the framework that has guided military modernization since 2009, is approaching the end of its planning horizon. The three-corps structure for the army is being implemented. The navy's ambitious frigate program, submarine expansion negotiations with South Korea, and indigenous shipbuilding efforts are transforming the character of Bangladesh's maritime presence. The air force is on the verge of its most consequential procurement decision since independence, choosing between Chinese, European, and potentially hybrid options for its next generation of combat aircraft. Drone manufacturing capability is being established through the CETC partnership. Bangladesh showcased its growing indigenous defense production capacity at the World Defence Show 2026 in Riyadh.

Against this background of concurrent transformation across all three services, the absence of a coherent, publicly articulated military doctrine is glaring. The BNP's doctrinal anchor in Ziaur Rahman's People's Warfare Doctrine, the NCP's reserve force expansion proposal, the interim government's assertive diversification strategy, and the army's three-corps reorganization all point in partially complementary and partially contradictory directions. What Bangladesh needs, and what this part seeks to provide the analytical foundation for, is a synthesized and coherent military doctrine appropriate to its strategic environment, its resources, its constitutional values, and its twenty-first-century operational challenges.

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF MILITARY DOCTRINE

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 What is Military Doctrine? The Definitional Foundations

Military doctrine occupies a specific and crucial place in the hierarchy of defense thinking. It sits below strategy, which articulates the relationship between political objectives and military means, and above tactics, which addresses the specific techniques by which forces engage adversaries in particular operational environments. Doctrine is the body of principles that guides how a military force prepares for and conducts operations, including the organization of forces, the methods by which those forces are trained and equipped, and the concepts that govern their employment in combat.

The United States Army defines doctrine as the fundamental principles by which military forces guide their actions in support of national objectives. The British Army's definition emphasizes that doctrine is authoritative but requires judgment in application: it is not a recipe but a framework within which commanders must exercise initiative and adapt to circumstances. The Clausewitzian insight underlies both definitions: doctrine is never a substitute for the military genius that can read a situation and respond creatively, but it provides the shared conceptual language that enables a military organization to act with coherent purpose across its many parts.

Doctrine serves several essential functions. It provides intellectual coherence, ensuring that the many elements of a military organization share a common understanding of their purpose, their organizational relationships, and the operational concepts that govern their employment. It provides the basis for training, since training is essentially the practice of doctrine in increasingly demanding conditions until it becomes internalized habit. It provides the framework for capability planning, since the identification of what equipment to procure, what skills to develop, and what infrastructure to build all derive from doctrinal requirements. And it provides the basis for interoperability, ensuring that Bangladesh's armed forces can work effectively with partner forces in multinational operations, particularly the United Nations peacekeeping missions that remain central to Bangladesh's international role.

The development of doctrine is also a deeply political act. Doctrinal choices reflect assumptions about who the likely adversaries are, what operational environments the force will encounter, what resources will be available, and what national values must constrain the use of force. A doctrine oriented toward large-scale conventional warfare against peer adversaries implies different force structure, procurement, and training requirements than a doctrine oriented toward counterinsurgency, peacekeeping, or coastal defense. The political contestation of these doctrinal choices, visible in the competing positions of Bangladesh's political parties in the 2026 election campaign, reflects genuine disagreements about national strategy that cannot be resolved by technical military analysis alone.

1.2 The History of Military Doctrine: Major Schools and Their Evolution

The history of military doctrine is inseparable from the history of war itself, since every significant military experience generates doctrinal reflection that shapes subsequent organizational and operational choices. But the formal, institutionalized development of military doctrine is a relatively modern phenomenon, traceable to the professionalization of European

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

militaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and accelerating dramatically in the twentieth century.

The Prussian military system, which produced Clausewitz and the doctrine of Auftragstaktik, the mission command philosophy that delegated authority to junior commanders to exercise initiative within the framework of the commander's intent, was the most influential doctrinal school of the nineteenth century and remains one of the foundational influences on contemporary Western military doctrine. Mission command, which is the practice of having commanders specify what they want achieved and why, while leaving subordinates maximum latitude to determine how to achieve it, is deeply relevant to Bangladesh's military modernization, particularly as it moves toward a three-corps structure with more decentralized command authority.

The French doctrine of the offensive, l'offensive a outrance, which dominated French military thinking before the First World War and contributed directly to the catastrophic losses of 1914-1915, provides the classic cautionary tale about doctrine untethered from realistic assessment. The French belief that offensive spirit and elan could overcome the defensive firepower of modern weapons led to frontal assaults against entrenched positions armed with machine guns, with results that were militarily disastrous. The lesson, repeated throughout the twentieth century in contexts from Gallipoli to Dien Bien Phu, is that doctrine must be grounded in an honest assessment of what is operationally achievable with available forces against likely adversaries, rather than in institutional mythology or political ideology.

The German Blitzkrieg concept of the Second World War, which combined armored mobility, combined arms integration, close air support, and the exploitation of operational shock to defeat much larger enemies through the quality of operational execution rather than numerical superiority, is particularly relevant to Bangladesh's strategic challenge of deterring or defeating forces that are numerically and materially superior. The Blitzkrieg concept demonstrated that a force that could act faster than its opponent, that could generate and exploit local superiority at decisive points while avoiding engagement where the adversary was strong, and that could maintain operational cohesion under the fog and friction of combat, could achieve dramatic results against opponents with significant overall superiority.

The Vietnam War contributed some of the most influential doctrinal thinking for smaller states resisting larger adversaries. Vo Nguyen Giap's theory of People's War, which Bangladesh's BNP has explicitly invoked as the intellectual ancestor of its own doctrinal vision, proposed a three-stage progression from guerrilla operations through mobile warfare to conventional offensive, sustained by mass popular support mobilized through political work. The Vietnam experience also contributed the concept of protracted war as a strategic weapon: by denying the adversary a decisive military victory and sustaining the conflict until the adversary's political will collapsed, a materially inferior force could achieve strategic victory. These concepts have direct relevance to Bangladesh's strategic position, though as will be discussed below, they require adaptation rather than wholesale adoption.

The Revolution in Military Affairs concept, which emerged in American strategic thinking in the 1990s and 2000s, argued that advances in information technology, precision guidance, and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

networked command systems were producing a fundamental discontinuity in the character of military operations. The Gulf War of 1991 appeared to validate this thesis: American forces achieved dramatic results against a numerically significant Iraqi military through the application of precision firepower guided by real-time intelligence. The subsequent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has qualified the Revolution in Military Affairs thesis considerably: against determined non-state adversaries using guerrilla tactics in complex terrain, precision firepower and information dominance do not automatically produce strategic success. But the general principle that information advantages, networked operations, and precision effects multiply the effectiveness of smaller and more capable forces against numerically superior but less technically sophisticated adversaries remains directly relevant to Bangladesh's force design thinking.

1.3 Contemporary Doctrinal Developments: Multi-Domain Operations and Integrated Deterrence

The most important doctrinal development in contemporary military thinking is the concept of Multi-Domain Operations, which was developed by the United States Army and published as its primary doctrinal concept in 2018 and formalized in subsequent publications. MDO recognizes that modern adversaries contest military superiority not just on the traditional battlefields of land, sea, and air, but simultaneously across cyberspace, space, the electromagnetic spectrum, and the information environment. It proposes that the response to this competition across multiple domains is to achieve convergence of effects across all domains faster than the adversary can respond, creating temporary windows of advantage that can be exploited to achieve operational objectives.

The MDO concept has been widely adopted and adapted by militaries across the world, including by states in Asia that face challenges analogous to Bangladesh's. The concept is directly relevant to the Bangladesh Armed Forces' modernization agenda because it provides a framework for thinking about how the capability investments being made across the three services, from naval submarines and surface combatants through army missile systems and air defense to air force combat aircraft and now UAV manufacturing capacity, can be integrated into a coherent operational capability rather than simply accumulated as separate service assets.

The related concept of Integrated Deterrence, articulated in the United States' 2022 National Defense Strategy, extends the logic of multi-domain operations from the warfighting context to the deterrence context. Integrated Deterrence argues that the most effective deterrence in the contemporary security environment combines military and non-military instruments, operates across multiple domains simultaneously, is exercised in close coordination with allies and partners, and is credible across the full spectrum of potential conflict. For Bangladesh, whose strategic objective is deterrence rather than war-fighting, the integrated deterrence concept provides a useful framework that goes beyond the purely military dimensions of capability and addresses the diplomatic, economic, and information dimensions of strategic competition.

The concept of Mosaic Warfare, developed by DARPA and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, takes the decentralization logic even further, proposing that future military advantage will come from the ability to rapidly assemble and reassemble diverse capabilities in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

response to specific operational challenges, rather than from the deployment of large, expensive, and complex platforms. This concept is particularly relevant to smaller militaries with limited resources: rather than attempting to replicate the full-spectrum capabilities of great power militaries, a resource-constrained force might achieve superior results by developing a diverse library of specialized capabilities that can be combined flexibly against specific threats.

CHAPTER TWO: BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING MILITARY DOCTRINE: FROM TERRITORIAL DEFENSE TO INTEGRATED DETERRENCE

2.1 The Historical Development of Bangladesh's Military Doctrine

Bangladesh's military doctrine has never been publicly articulated in a comprehensive official document. This absence, as noted in Part Three of this textbook, is itself a significant governance failure, because it means that the doctrinal assumptions that guide force structure decisions, procurement choices, training programs, and operational planning are never subjected to public scrutiny or democratic debate. What can be reconstructed from available evidence, including Force Goal 2030 documentation, parliamentary testimony, academic analysis, and the public positions of political parties, reveals a doctrine that has evolved considerably from the early post-independence period but remains incomplete and in significant respects internally contradictory.

The foundational period of Bangladeshi military doctrine, from 1971 through the early 1980s, was shaped by the experience of the Liberation War and the subsequent period of acute political instability. The Liberation War itself was conducted primarily as a guerrilla insurgency, with the Mukti Bahini operating as irregular forces supported by India's regular military forces. The foundational military experience of independent Bangladesh was therefore not conventional territorial defense but irregular warfare supported by external assistance. This experience embedded in the military's institutional memory both the potential effectiveness of irregular warfare and the critical importance of external support, particularly Indian support, in determining strategic outcomes.

The subsequent coups of 1975 and 1982, and the long periods of military-dominated governance under Ziaur Rahman and Hussain Muhammad Ershad, shaped a military culture that was primarily oriented toward internal political control rather than external defense. The army's extensive engagement in civilian governance, its management of civil administrative functions, and its participation in economic activities through entities like the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory all reflected a conception of the military's role that was fundamentally different from the Clausewitzian ideal of military forces as instruments of political policy rather than political actors in their own right.

The democratic transition of 1991 and the subsequent alternation between BNP and Awami League governments created a political environment in which both major parties sought to maintain military loyalty through a combination of material benefits, including expanded

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

budgets, international peacekeeping opportunities, and tolerance of military business interests, and doctrinal deference, leaving the military largely free to develop its own internal culture and operational concepts without civilian oversight or strategic direction.

The formal introduction of Forces Goal 2030 in 2009 represented the first systematic attempt to impose a coherent planning framework on military development since the early post-independence period. The document's emphasis on building a three-dimensional force, meaning a military with credible land, sea, and air capabilities, and on modernizing all three services simultaneously rather than focusing exclusively on the army as had historically been the case, reflected a genuine strategic evolution. The maritime dimension of Forces Goal 2030, driven partly by Bangladesh's consecutive legal victories over India and Myanmar in maritime boundary disputes that created a large Exclusive Economic Zone requiring defense, was particularly significant because it represented the first time that naval capability was treated as a primary rather than secondary defense priority.

2.2 The BNP's People's Warfare Doctrine: Historical Roots, Political Logic, and Operational Implications

The BNP's 2026 election manifesto anchored its defense policy vision in what it termed the People's Warfare Doctrine, attributed to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, who led Bangladesh from 1975 until his assassination in 1981. The explicit invocation of this doctrinal heritage is politically significant and operationally interesting, and it deserves careful analytical examination.

Ziaur Rahman's approach to defense was shaped by his experience as a sector commander during the Liberation War and by his subsequent engagement with both Pakistani military doctrine, which included elements drawn from Chinese People's War theory, and with the strategic environment of a newly independent, resource-constrained state surrounded by a much more powerful neighbor. The core elements of what might be termed his doctrinal legacy include an emphasis on a large, politically engaged citizen force that blurs the boundary between the armed forces and the general population; on territorial defense through resistance rather than conventional force-on-force engagement; on strategic self-reliance rather than dependence on a single external patron; and on the military's role in national development alongside its security function.

The doctrinal logic of this approach draws directly on Mao Zedong's theory of People's War and on Vo Nguyen Giap's adaptation of that theory to the Vietnamese context, both of which argued that a smaller, weaker force could defeat a larger, stronger adversary by mobilizing the entire population as a source of strategic depth, by conducting protracted warfare that exhausted the adversary's political will rather than attempting to win decisive military engagements, and by making the adversary's occupation costs exceed the political benefits of continued aggression.

Applied to Bangladesh's contemporary strategic situation, the People's Warfare Doctrine implies a force structure that emphasizes reserve forces, territorial militia, and the integration of civilian society into the national defense effort, rather than relying exclusively on a small professional force equipped with expensive weapons systems. The NCP's January 2026 manifesto proposal to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

create a reserve force twice the size of the conventional armed forces, approximately six hundred thousand personnel, is the most concrete recent expression of this doctrinal logic.

The People's Warfare concept has genuine strategic merit for Bangladesh. Bangladesh's geography, with its dense river networks, extensive coastal areas, and large population concentrated in a relatively small territory, is actually well suited to territorial resistance strategies of the kind that People's War theory describes. An adversary attempting to occupy or coerce Bangladesh would face the prospect of an extremely difficult operational environment: the riverine terrain makes mechanized movement difficult and creates ideal conditions for ambush and interdiction; the population density means that any military operation would inevitably involve civilian areas and therefore impose significant political costs on the aggressor; and the sheer size of Bangladesh's population, approaching one hundred and seventy million people, means that effective mobilization could create an enormous reserve of manpower that no external force could reasonably contain.

But the People's Warfare concept also has significant limitations that the BNP manifesto does not acknowledge. The core assumption of People's War theory, that popular resistance will sustain itself over the protracted period necessary to exhaust the adversary's political will, depends on the adversary having a political will that can be exhausted. Against an adversary pursuing limited strategic objectives through military coercion, as opposed to an adversary attempting full territorial occupation, People's War's logic is less compelling. The adversary might simply accomplish its limited objectives quickly and then withdraw, leaving Bangladesh's population mobilization without a relevant strategic target. The protracted war strategy also assumes that the defending population will maintain cohesion and will under conditions of sustained military pressure, an assumption that Bangladesh's own political history gives grounds to doubt.

The optimal doctrinal synthesis, which the BNP manifesto actually approaches in its commitment to updating the People's Warfare Doctrine in light of contemporary threats while ensuring coherence across all defense-related policies, combines the legitimate elements of People's War theory, particularly the reserve force concept, the territorial defense emphasis, and the strategic self-reliance principle, with the conventional deterrence requirements of modern multi-domain competition.

2.3 The Doctrinal Synthesis: Defensive Realism with Asymmetric Deterrence

The most defensible doctrinal framework for Bangladesh in its current strategic environment is what might be termed Defensive Realism with Asymmetric Deterrence. This framework draws on the strategic autonomy tradition, the People's Warfare doctrinal heritage, the comparative lessons of the states examined in Part Two, and the specific operational requirements of Bangladesh's geographic situation and threat environment.

The defensive realism component of this framework, drawing on Kenneth Waltz's defensive realism and Charles Glaser's security dilemma analysis, means that Bangladesh's military posture should be primarily oriented toward defense rather than power projection, toward deterrence rather than warfighting, and toward the signaling of defensive intent rather than the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

demonstration of offensive capability. A posture of defensive realism reduces the security dilemma dynamics that would otherwise provoke countermeasures from Bangladesh's powerful neighbors, particularly India, whose military superiority is so overwhelming that any Bangladeshi military expansion will inevitably be perceived through an Indian security lens.

The asymmetric deterrence component means that within the overall defensive orientation, Bangladesh should invest specifically in capabilities that impose disproportionate costs on potential aggressors relative to the investment required to acquire them. Anti-ship missile systems for naval vessels and coastal defense units create a threat to adversary naval operations that is far more expensive to counter than to create. Area denial munitions, including sea mines and anti-submarine systems, can make contested maritime spaces significantly more costly to operate in. Advanced air defense systems, including the Turkish-supplied systems that Bangladesh has been acquiring, deny air superiority to potential adversaries at far lower cost than the air superiority fighters necessary to challenge them directly. Long-range precision artillery, including the TRG-300 and WS-22 multiple launch rocket systems already in Bangladesh army service, provides a deterrent against ground force concentrations near Bangladesh's borders.

The combination of defensive orientation with asymmetric deterrent capabilities captures both the strategic logic of the security dilemma management, by demonstrating that Bangladesh poses no offensive threat to its neighbors, and the operational logic of deterrence by punishment, by ensuring that any attempt to coerce or attack Bangladesh would impose military costs that rational adversaries would prefer to avoid.

CHAPTER THREE: THE THREE-CORPS REORGANIZATION OF THE BANGLADESH ARMY

3.1 The Strategic Logic of the Corps Structure

The Bangladesh Army's reorganization into three independent corps, I Corps at Bogura covering Western Command, II Corps at Sylhet covering Central-Eastern Command, and III Corps at Chattogram covering Southeastern Command, represents the most significant structural change in the army since independence and reflects a fundamental doctrinal evolution in how Bangladesh's ground forces are intended to operate.

The logic of the corps-level reorganization is strategic geography. Bangladesh's land borders present three distinct strategic axes that correspond reasonably well to the three corps' areas of responsibility. The western and northwestern border with India, covered by I Corps headquartered at Bogura, is the sector of greatest strategic sensitivity and greatest conventional military risk, given the proximity of Indian forces and the terrain that offers relatively easy mechanized movement compared to the rest of Bangladesh's borders. The northeastern border with India, passing through the Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions, covered by II Corps, presents a different operational challenge: the terrain is more broken, river systems are more complex, and the strategic depth available to defending forces is limited by Bangladesh's narrow eastern

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

extensions. The southeastern border with Myanmar, covered by III Corps at Chattogram, presents yet another distinct operational environment: mountainous and forested terrain that strongly favors the defender, littoral areas along the Bay of Bengal coast that require joint army-navy-air force coordination, and the specific challenge of operating in the context of the Myanmar civil war's spillover effects.

The practical advantages of the corps-level structure are substantial. Corps headquarters provide a level of operational planning capacity and command authority that divisional headquarters cannot replicate. A corps commander at the rank of Lieutenant General, commanding multiple divisions with their supporting artillery, armor, engineers, and logistics, can plan and execute operationally significant maneuvers across a front several hundred kilometers wide. The decentralization of operational authority to corps level, consistent with the mission command principle, allows for faster decision cycles in response to rapidly developing situations.

The corps structure also provides a more rational basis for joint operations coordination. Each corps area encompasses a portion of Bangladesh's coastline and airspace, and effective area defense requires the integration of ground, air, and naval assets under unified operational direction. A corps headquarters that includes joint fire coordination elements, maritime coordination elements, and air defense coordination elements can provide this integration in a way that a smaller divisional headquarters cannot.

The material requirements for the corps reorganization are substantial. The establishment of three complete corps with their supporting infrastructure, command and control systems, logistics bases, and training facilities represents a major investment that the current defense budget, heavily weighted toward operational costs rather than development expenditure, is not fully supporting. The modest nine hundred and sixteen crore taka allocated to development projects in the 2025-26 defense budget is clearly insufficient to sustain the material dimensions of the corps reorganization alongside the naval and air force modernization programs also underway.

3.2 I Corps (Western Command): Threat Assessment and Operational Concept

I Corps, headquartered at Bogura with responsibility for the western and northwestern borders, faces what is analytically the most complex strategic situation of the three corps, not because India is a likely aggressor against Bangladesh, but because the military asymmetry between I Corps and the opposing Indian forces is so profound that even a defensive posture requires careful thought about what military options are actually available.

The Indian Eastern Command, headquartered in Kolkata, and the Indian Army's II Corps at Ambala, within relatively short operational reach of Bangladesh's western border, represent conventional military capabilities that dwarf anything Bangladesh could field in the region. Indian ground forces in the eastern sector include modern main battle tanks, mechanized infantry, heavy artillery, and combat aviation that collectively far exceed the defensive capacity of any force that Bangladesh could deploy with its current resources.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The operational implications of this asymmetry are not that defense is hopeless but that the operational concept for Western Command must be calibrated to the realistic level of deterrence achievable. The I Corps concept should center on area denial rather than positional defense, on raising the cost of any potential incursion significantly above the political benefits of that incursion, and on buying time for diplomatic intervention and international pressure to operate. This is classical deterrence by punishment in a conventional framework: the goal is not to defeat an Indian incursion by force but to ensure that any such incursion would be so costly, both militarily and politically, that rational Indian decision-making would preclude it.

The specific capabilities required for this concept include: anti-armor systems in depth, including the Metis-M and PF-98 systems already in service supplemented by the American FGM-148 Javelin system for which Bangladesh issued a Request for Information in November 2025, which would give Infantry forces the ability to engage even modern main battle tanks effectively; indirect fire systems capable of reaching rear areas and logistics routes, including the TRG-300 Kasirga and WS-22 MLRS systems already in service; extensive obstacle systems in key avenues of approach, exploiting Bangladesh's riverine terrain to channel and slow mechanized movement; and strong air defense coverage to deny air superiority over the defended area.

The operational art required for Western Command also demands careful attention to the population dimension. Any conflict in the western border area would occur in one of the most densely populated regions of one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Military operations that cause significant civilian casualties would undermine the popular will that is the strategic foundation of the defensive resistance concept. Rules of engagement, targeting procedures, and urban operations doctrine all require specific development for this environment.

3.3 II Corps (Central-Eastern Command): The Critical Strategic Depth Problem

II Corps, headquartered at Sylhet and responsible for the northeastern border areas, faces perhaps the most difficult strategic challenge of the three corps because the northeastern border areas lack the geographic depth necessary for elastic defense. The Sylhet division, which forms the corps' primary area of responsibility, is essentially a salient extending northeast into Indian territory, bounded on the north and east by Meghalaya and the Assam hills. The river systems of this area, including the Surma and Kushiyara, flow generally from northeast to southwest, which means they create obstacles to lateral movement along the border rather than obstacles to penetration from the north.

The doctrinal response to limited strategic depth is to emphasize forward defense rather than elastic defense: to contest any incursion at the border rather than allowing penetrating forces to exploit their momentum deep into Bangladeshi territory. This forward defense concept requires high-quality forces with significant firepower concentrated near the border, rather than the defense-in-depth concept that allows trading space for time.

The corps also faces the specific challenge of the Sylhet Cantonment's positioning, which places significant forces relatively close to a border that has historically been managed at the police and border guard level rather than through military deployment. The diplomatic implications of military force concentration near the India border are themselves a deterrence variable:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sufficiently visible military preparation creates its own deterrent effect, while insufficiently visible preparation risks appearing as weakness.

II Corps also has the critical mission of providing reserve forces for rapid reinforcement of both I Corps to the west and III Corps to the southeast. The corps' position in the center of the country makes it the strategic reserve for the army as a whole, and its rapid movement capability is therefore as important as its direct defensive capacity. The riverine terrain of central Bangladesh makes road movement the primary transport option, and the condition of road infrastructure connecting Sylhet to both Bogura and Chattogram is directly relevant to the corps' strategic mobility.

3.4 III Corps (Southeastern Command): The Littoral Warfare Challenge

III Corps, headquartered at Chattogram and responsible for the southeastern sector including Cox's Bazar, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the coastline of the Bay of Bengal, faces the most operationally complex environment of the three corps because its area of responsibility encompasses mountain and jungle terrain, littoral coastal areas requiring joint operations capability, and the extraordinary political and security complexity of the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, which extend along Bangladesh's southeastern border with Myanmar and India's Mizoram and Tripura states, present a terrain that strongly favors light infantry over armored or mechanized forces and that has historically been the site of insurgent activity by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti, or PCJSS, during the decades of conflict that ended with the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and by various armed groups since. The corps' light infantry capability, including the para commando units that have been expanded under Forces Goal 2030, is directly relevant to the Hill Tracts environment.

The coastal dimension of III Corps' area requires a different set of capabilities: maritime patrol and interdiction to address the cross-border flow of refugees, weapons, and armed groups across the Naf River and the Bay of Bengal; coastal defense systems to deny adversary naval access to the Bay of Bengal's northern reaches; and amphibious operations capability to support both defensive and emergency response operations in the coastal islands and delta areas. The close operational coordination required between III Corps and Bangladesh Navy units operating out of Chattogram and the submarine base at Pekua, known as BNS Sheikh Hasina, makes this sector the most demanding for joint operations doctrine development.

The Rohingya dimension creates additional challenges that are simultaneously humanitarian, legal, political, and military. The concentration of approximately one million displaced persons in the Cox's Bazar district, in camps that have spawned criminal networks, arms trafficking, and recruitment by armed non-state groups, creates a persistent low-level security challenge that is neither conventional military operations nor straightforward law enforcement. The security dimension of this challenge falls primarily on the Border Guard Bangladesh and the police, but the army and the corps headquarters must maintain contingency plans for more serious security deterioration in the camp areas, and must coordinate with civilian authorities and the UN refugee agency UNHCR on the security management of the camps.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FOUR: NAVAL DOCTRINE AND MARITIME STRATEGY

4.1 The Three-Dimensional Navy Concept: Theoretical Foundation and Current Reality

The conceptual framework that has driven Bangladesh Navy's modernization since 2009 is the three-dimensional navy concept: the aspiration to field a force with credible capabilities in all three operational dimensions, surface, sub-surface, and aviation. This concept reflects a sound understanding of how naval power operates in the contemporary maritime environment, where any single-dimensional force, one limited to surface vessels without either submarines or air power, is inherently vulnerable to multi-dimensional attack.

The theoretical basis for the three-dimensional navy concept draws on the classical naval strategic tradition, particularly the Mahanian insight that a navy exists to control sea lanes, protect maritime commerce, deny adversaries the use of the sea, and project force at a distance. For Bangladesh, whose maritime Exclusive Economic Zone of one hundred and eighteen thousand eight hundred and thirteen square kilometers represents an enormous area of sovereign jurisdiction containing significant natural resources, including gas fields in the Bay of Bengal, the ability to deny adversary forces access to this zone and to enforce Bangladesh's sovereign rights against illegal fishing, smuggling, and potential military intrusion is a direct national interest.

The three-dimensional capability also provides the most credible deterrent posture available to Bangladesh in the maritime domain. Surface vessels alone are highly vulnerable to air attack and submarine operations. A force that adds submarine capability denies an adversary the ability to calculate a clean sea superiority against Bangladesh's surface fleet. A force that adds maritime patrol aviation significantly extends the area over which Bangladesh can exercise sea control functions and the intelligence picture within which both surface and submarine forces operate.

As of November 2025, the Bangladesh Navy's fleet composition includes five guided missile frigates, two patrol frigates, two Type 035G Ming-class submarines, six corvettes, thirty-eight minor surface combatants of various types including patrol vessels and missile boats, and thirty auxiliaries. Naval aviation is organized around maritime patrol aircraft and ASW helicopters. The three indigenous shipyards, Khulna Shipyard Limited, Dockyard and Engineering Works Limited, and Chittagong Dry Dock Limited, all owned by the navy, provide an important indigenous shipbuilding capacity, having built the Durjoy-class and Padma-class patrol craft and being tasked with constructing six larger offshore patrol vessels and six multi-role guided missile frigates.

The critical assessment of this force structure against the requirement establishes both what has been achieved and what remains deficient. The surface fleet represents a genuine capability: the guided missile frigates equipped with anti-ship missiles create a surface strike threat that no

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

adversary can disregard. The submarine force, while currently limited to two aging Ming-class vessels, establishes the doctrinal and infrastructure foundation for future expansion. The indigenous shipbuilding program, while delayed, represents the long-term path to strategic self-sufficiency that no amount of procurement can substitute for.

The deficiencies are equally clear. The Ming-class submarines, commissioned in 2017 but based on 1970s technology, have limited combat capability against modern anti-submarine warfare forces. Their primary strategic value is in the ambiguity they create: an adversary naval commander cannot be certain that these submarines are not present and operational, which constrains freedom of movement in Bangladesh's waters. But against a sophisticated opponent with modern sonar and ASW systems, the Ming-class would face severe vulnerabilities. The advanced negotiations with South Korea for six Improved Jang Bogo-class submarines, which are based on the German Type 209/1400 design and would represent a dramatic capability improvement, address this deficiency directly and represent the single most consequential naval acquisition Bangladesh could make.

4.2 The Submarine Expansion Negotiations: Strategic Analysis

The Bangladesh Navy's negotiations with South Korea for six Improved Jang Bogo-class submarines at an estimated cost of approximately two billion dollars represents one of the most strategically significant defense acquisition decisions in Bangladesh's history. The decision to acquire six submarines rather than merely replacing the existing two Ming-class vessels reflects a doctrinal judgment about the level of submarine capability necessary to provide credible deterrence and sea control in the Bay of Bengal, and it deserves extended analytical examination.

The Improved Jang Bogo-class, also known as the KSS-I variant, is based on the German HDW Type 209/1400 design, which has been one of the most commercially successful submarine platforms in history, with numerous export customers across Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The Type 209 design features a single-shaft diesel-electric propulsion system with a range of approximately one hundred and fifty miles submerged and four hundred and fifty miles snorting, a diving depth of approximately two hundred and fifty meters, and an armament of eight 533mm torpedo tubes. The Improved Jang Bogo variant includes South Korean-specific modifications including an improved combat management system, an integrated sensor suite, and local weapons compatibility.

Six submarines of this class would give Bangladesh a force capable of maintaining a continuous patrol presence in the Bay of Bengal, which typically requires at least three submarines in the force structure: one deployed, one in refit or maintenance, and one in work-up or crew training. Three operational submarines on rotation would provide Bangladesh with the ability to threaten any adversary's surface forces operating in Bangladesh's EEZ with lethal submarine attack, which is precisely the kind of asymmetric deterrent capability that defensive realism theory recommends.

The basing of these submarines at the new facility at BNS Pekua near Cox's Bazar, constructed by China's Poly Technologies at a cost of one point two nine billion dollars, is strategically significant. The Pekua base gives the submarine force access to the deep water of the central Bay

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

of Bengal without the navigational constraints of Chattogram harbor's shallow approaches, significantly expanding the operational reach and tactical flexibility of the submarine force.

The acquisition is also politically complex. South Korean submarine technology carries American export control implications, since the Type 209 design originated in Germany but many of the combat systems include American components. The acquisition would require American approval for the technology transfer aspects of the deal. This creates a leverage point for the United States in Bangladesh's defense procurement decisions, and managing that leverage will require careful diplomatic handling. The acquisition also diversifies Bangladesh's submarine procurement base away from China, which supplied the current Ming-class submarines, a strategic diversification consistent with the post-revolution government's broader approach to defense partnerships.

4.3 The Indigenous Frigate Program: Assessment of Delays and Prospects

Bangladesh's indigenous frigate program, intended to produce six multi-role guided missile frigates at Chittagong Dry Dock Limited, has experienced significant delays relative to the original schedule, which anticipated the first pair by 2022, two more by 2025, and the final pair by 2030. The delays reflect a combination of financing challenges, geopolitical complications following the Rohingya crisis which affected the original plan for Chinese technical assistance, and the inherent complexity of constructing modern guided missile frigates in a shipyard without previous experience building vessels of that sophistication.

The program's strategic importance, however, remains fully justified. The indigenous production of major surface combatants would represent a transformational development in Bangladesh's defense industrial capability. A shipyard that can build frigates can also maintain them, modify them, and eventually improve them, creating the kind of learning-by-doing technological development that Korea, Japan, and India have demonstrated is the path to genuine naval industrial self-sufficiency. The European companies that have shown interest in the program, following the revision of the Chinese-only approach in 2017, could provide both the technology transfer necessary to build the vessels and the export control environment that would give Bangladesh access to better Western weapons systems than Chinese assistance alone would provide.

The program also needs to be viewed in the context of the broader narrative of Bangladesh's strategic diversification. A frigate program that involves European technology transfer, Japanese component supply under the new February 2026 defense agreement, and South Korean shipbuilding consultation would create exactly the kind of multi-source, diversified defense industrial relationship that Bangladesh's strategic autonomy requires.

4.4 Maritime Doctrine: Sea Control, Sea Denial, and the Blue Water Question

The central doctrinal question for Bangladesh's naval strategy is the balance between sea control, the positive capacity to use the sea for one's own purposes, and sea denial, the negative capacity to prevent an adversary from using the sea for theirs. For a navy of Bangladesh's size and capability against potential adversaries with significantly larger and more sophisticated naval

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

forces, particularly India and China, the honest answer is that Bangladesh cannot aspire to sea control in the broader Bay of Bengal against serious opposition. What Bangladesh can aspire to is sea denial in its immediate EEZ and approaches, combined with sufficient sea control capacity in its coastal waters to protect maritime commerce and enforce sovereign rights.

The doctrinal implication is an area denial strategy centered on the navy's submarine force, anti-ship missile capability, and coastal defense systems, combined with sea control operations using surface combatants and maritime patrol aircraft in the coastal zone. This is not an ambitious vision, but it is a realistic one, and realism about what is achievable with available resources is the first requirement of sound doctrine.

The question of whether Bangladesh should aspire to any blue water, meaning open ocean beyond the coastal zone, capability is more contested. The argument for blue water capability points to Bangladesh's EEZ, which extends far into the Bay of Bengal and whose resources can only be protected by forces with the range and endurance to operate in those distant waters. The argument against notes that blue water capability requires a qualitative leap in logistics, training, and platform sophistication that is far beyond Bangladesh's current and near-term resources, and that the opportunity cost of blue water investment in terms of the coastal and littoral capabilities that Bangladesh most urgently needs is prohibitive.

The sensible doctrinal resolution is a medium-term focus on littoral and coastal defense with the submarine force as the primary deterrent against major power intervention, combined with an offshore patrol vessel capacity to assert sovereign presence in the EEZ against the non-military threats of illegal fishing and smuggling, and a longer-term aspiration to limited blue water capability as resources permit.

CHAPTER FIVE: AIR POWER DOCTRINE AND THE COMBAT AIRCRAFT DECISION

5.1 The Theory of Air Power and Its Application to Bangladesh

Air power theory has evolved dramatically from Douhet's original claim that strategic bombing could win wars independently of land and naval operations, through the bitter experience of the Second World War which demonstrated both the destructive potential and the limits of strategic bombing, to the contemporary understanding of air power as a joint enabler that multiplies the effectiveness of other military forces rather than a war-winning instrument by itself.

For Bangladesh, air power serves three primary doctrinal functions. The first is air defense: protecting Bangladesh's territory and forces from air attack by adversary aircraft or missiles. This function is most visibly reflected in Bangladesh's acquisition of Turkish air defense systems, including advanced SHORAD systems, and in the ongoing development of an integrated air defense network. The second function is air superiority: establishing control of the air over the battlefield area to allow ground and naval forces to operate without air attack. The third function

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

is ground and maritime support: using air-delivered firepower to support the operations of ground and naval forces in both offensive and defensive operations.

The relative priority Bangladesh assigns to these three functions should be determined by honest assessment of likely operational scenarios. In any realistic scenario involving conflict with India, Bangladesh's air forces face an adversary with overwhelming numerical and qualitative superiority. India's air force includes Su-30MKI, Rafale, and Tejas fighters in numbers that cannot be matched by any force Bangladesh could field. Air superiority against India is simply not achievable with realistic defense budgets. Air defense, meaning the capacity to impose costs on Indian air operations through surface-to-air missiles and fighter interception, is achievable and represents the priority investment.

Against Myanmar, the situation is more balanced. Myanmar's air force, weakened by civil war and the use of its limited combat aircraft against its own population, represents a less sophisticated threat that Bangladesh's modernized air force should be able to deal with more confidently. Air superiority over the southeastern sector against Myanmar air assets is a realistic objective.

Against non-state actors, both in potential counter-insurgency scenarios and in maritime interdiction operations, air power is a decisive enabler: helicopter-borne special operations forces, fixed-wing intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance aircraft, and strike aircraft for maritime patrol and surface attack all provide capabilities that have no equivalent in ground or naval forces.

5.2 The Fighter Aircraft Decision: The Most Consequential Procurement Choice

No defense procurement decision in Bangladesh's history carries more strategic consequence than the choice of the next generation of combat aircraft for the Bangladesh Air Force. The current fleet is built around aging Chinese-origin F-7BGI variants and a small number of MiG-29s, all of which are approaching end of their operational lives. The F-7's age has been dramatically highlighted by a 2025 crash in Dhaka, which focused public and institutional attention on the urgency of replacement.

The options under serious consideration as of 2026 are the Chinese Chengdu J-10CE, the European Eurofighter Typhoon, the Chinese-Pakistani JF-17 Block III, and potentially the French Rafale. The Letter of Intent signed with Italian manufacturer Leonardo on December 9, 2025 for the Eurofighter Typhoon, and the near-simultaneous approval process for the J-10CE acquisition, have created a genuine two-track competition that reflects both Bangladesh's strategic diversification ambitions and the complexity of translating those ambitions into coherent procurement decisions.

The J-10CE case rests on several pillars. The price per unit at approximately sixty million dollars is favorable compared to the Eurofighter's substantially higher unit cost. China's demonstrated willingness to extend favorable financing terms to Bangladesh, its openness to technology transfer arrangements, and Bangladesh's extensive existing infrastructure for operating Chinese military equipment including spare parts logistics chains, training pipelines, and maintenance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

facilities, all reduce the friction costs of the acquisition. The J-10CE's technical specifications, including an AESA radar believed to be the KLJ-7A, a top speed of Mach 1.8, and a combat radius of over twelve hundred kilometers, represent a genuine fourth-generation-plus capability that would dramatically upgrade Bangladesh Air Force's strike and air superiority capacity.

The Eurofighter case rests on different considerations. The platform is arguably the most capable combat aircraft that Bangladesh has seriously considered, with capabilities that the J-10CE cannot match across all mission sets. Critically, the Eurofighter option opens a channel to European defense cooperation that could have consequences far beyond the aircraft procurement itself, including access to NATO-standard communication systems, interoperability with European and American partners in training and peacekeeping operations, and a diplomatic signal of partnership with the Western security order that has value independently of the aircraft's technical performance. The UK offered the Eurofighter as early as 2019, and France has proposed the Rafale since 2020, suggesting sustained European interest in the relationship.

The three-tier fighter structure proposed by analysts in January 2026, combining twenty-four Eurofighter Typhoons, forty J-10CEs, and forty-eight JF-17 Block III aircraft, attempts a synthetic solution that preserves relationships with both Western and Chinese partners while addressing the force structure requirement at a feasible overall cost. The doctrinal logic of the proposal is defensible: the Eurofighter provides a high-end air superiority and multi-role capability for the most demanding scenarios; the J-10CE provides a medium-tier capability for the full range of everyday operations; and the JF-17 Block III, which Bangladesh already operates through familiarity with its Chinese-Pakistani lineage and which costs significantly less than either the Eurofighter or the J-10CE, fills the light multirole and maritime strike roles.

The operational complexity of this three-type structure is, however, a serious concern. Operating three different fighter platforms from three different national supply chains, each requiring its own spare parts logistics, maintenance documentation, weapons compatibility certification, and pilot conversion training pipeline, would impose a burden on the Bangladesh Air Force's organizational and financial resources that could undermine the operational readiness of all three types simultaneously. The South Korean Air Force, which also operated multiple fighter types during its modernization, has learned from experience that the complexity costs of fleet diversity need to be carefully managed and that there is a point at which diversity becomes operational dysfunction.

The policy recommendation that follows from this analysis is not a specific aircraft choice but a specific process. The decision should be preceded by a formal independent capability assessment that defines what the Bangladesh Air Force actually needs its fighter force to do, across what range of operational scenarios, and at what level of readiness. That assessment should then determine the required capabilities, from which the procurement choice should follow. Making the procurement choice before completing the capability assessment, which has been Bangladesh's historical approach to major acquisitions, invariably leads to force structure that reflects supplier preferences and political relationships rather than genuine operational requirements.

5.3 The BAF 2040 Vision: Network-Centric Air Power

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh Air Force's long-term planning framework, designated BAF 2040, envisions a networked air force that integrates AESA radars, data links, and beyond-visual-range missiles as standard combat elements. This vision reflects the broader contemporary consensus about the direction of military aviation: that the era of the lone dog-fighting pilot is over and that future air combat will be dominated by networked systems in which aircraft function as nodes in a sensor-shooter web rather than as standalone platforms.

The BAF 2040 concept has implications well beyond the combat aircraft choice. A networked air force requires comprehensive data link infrastructure across all platforms, shared situational awareness systems that allow pilots and ground controllers to see the same battlespace picture in real time, electronic warfare systems that can counter adversary data links and sensors while protecting Bangladesh's own networks, and robust communication security to prevent adversary exploitation of the network. These infrastructure requirements are potentially as expensive as the platforms themselves and receive far less analytical attention.

The integration of the CETC UAV manufacturing agreement into the BAF 2040 framework is particularly important. Unmanned aerial vehicles in the MALE category, which the CETC agreement covers, have a range and endurance that far exceeds manned aircraft for the ISR mission, can be operated continuously without crew fatigue constraints, and cost a fraction of manned combat aircraft. The integration of MALE UAVs into the BAF's networked architecture, providing persistent surveillance and targeting information to both manned aircraft and surface forces, could multiply the effectiveness of the entire force structure at relatively modest marginal cost.

The Bangladesh Aeronautical Research and Development Centre, BARDC, has already flown four home-designed aircraft prototypes, a capability that is far more strategically significant than its modest public profile suggests. The ability to design aircraft, even relatively simple ones, creates a foundation of aeronautical engineering knowledge that can eventually support more ambitious indigenous development programs. The development of a domestically designed and produced trainer aircraft, which is the typical first step in building an indigenous military aviation industrial base, would be an appropriate near-term objective that builds on the BARDC's existing capability.

CHAPTER SIX: UNMANNED SYSTEMS, ASYMMETRIC CAPABILITIES, AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF PRECISION WARFARE

6.1 The Drone Revolution: Doctrinal and Strategic Implications

The Ukraine war has provided the most dramatic and consequential real-world demonstration of the military utility of unmanned aerial systems, or drones, in conventional warfare since the technology first appeared. Both sides in the conflict have used drones extensively: for reconnaissance and targeting; for precision strike against specific high-value targets; for

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

electronic warfare and jamming; for psychological effect and information operations; and, most recently, for massed kamikaze attacks using inexpensive platforms that overwhelm air defense systems through numbers.

The lessons of the Ukraine drone war for Bangladesh are profound and demand serious doctrinal attention. The most immediate lesson is cost asymmetry: relatively inexpensive drones can destroy extremely expensive weapons systems, creating a cost ratio that strongly favors the drone attacker. A drone costing a few thousand dollars can destroy a tank costing several million. A drone costing a few hundred dollars can damage or destroy a radar system costing tens of millions. The implications for Bangladesh's force structure design are significant: investment in drone capabilities, both offensive and defensive, may offer better return on limited defense resources than investment in additional conventional platforms.

The second lesson is vulnerability asymmetry: conventional military forces, which were designed primarily against other conventional military forces, are not well equipped to defend against massed drone attacks. Bangladesh's existing air defense systems, including the FM-90 surface-to-air missiles and the SHORAD systems under acquisition, are designed against conventional aircraft and cruise missiles, not against swarms of small, cheap drones. The development of drone-specific defensive capabilities, including electronic warfare jamming systems, directed-energy weapons, and smart munitions capable of engaging small aerial targets cost-effectively, is an urgent doctrinal and procurement priority.

The third lesson is the intelligence multiplication effect: persistent drone ISR capability, meaning the ability to maintain continuous aerial surveillance of an area of interest, fundamentally changes the information environment of military operations. Forces that can see continuously can target more effectively, can anticipate adversary movements, and can adjust their own dispositions in real time. Bangladesh's investment in MALE UAV capability through the CETC agreement addresses this requirement directly.

6.2 The CETC UAV Agreement: Detailed Analysis and Strategic Assessment

The agreement signed on January 27, 2026 between the Bangladesh Air Force and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation International to establish a domestic UAV manufacturing and assembly plant represents a strategic investment that deserves detailed analysis beyond the headline figures. The agreement covers the joint establishment of a manufacturing facility to produce and assemble various categories of drones, including MALE and VTOL platforms, with comprehensive technology transfer including capacity building, industrial skills development, and joint technical cooperation aimed at achieving long-term self-reliance in UAV production.

The strategic value of this agreement operates on three distinct levels. At the immediate operational level, the establishment of a domestic UAV manufacturing capacity reduces Bangladesh's dependence on imported drone systems, which are subject to both supply chain disruptions and potential export restrictions. At the industrial level, the technology transfer component, if implemented genuinely, provides Bangladesh's defense industrial workforce with skills that have broad application across military and civilian aerospace, creating human capital

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

with lasting strategic value. At the symbolic level, the agreement represents Bangladesh's participation in the global trend toward domestic defense industrial capacity that the Ukraine war has made strategically imperative.

The specific technical choice of CETC International as the partner is not without strategic complications. CETC is one of China's major state-owned defense electronics companies, with both civilian and military product lines. Its export control classification under Chinese law means that the military-specification versions of its UAV products may carry restrictions on third-country transfer that could limit Bangladesh's ability to use the systems in multinational operations or to share the technology with other partners. The dual-use nature of drone technology, which spans civilian applications from agricultural surveillance to commercial delivery alongside military applications, creates additional complexity in the export control framework.

The political signal of the CETC agreement, coming at a time when Bangladesh is simultaneously pursuing the Eurofighter Typhoon and the Japan defense technology transfer agreement, is consistent with the strategic diversification approach but raises questions about the coherence of the overall industrial policy. A domestic UAV manufacturing facility based on Chinese technology, combat aircraft potentially sourced from both China and Europe, and naval vessels drawing on Korean, German, and potentially Japanese technology, creates a defense industrial base of extraordinary diversity but potentially poor integration. The question of whether Bangladesh has the industrial management and systems integration capability to leverage this diversity into a coherent operational capability is one that defense policy analysts must raise honestly.

6.3 Anti-Tank Guided Missiles and Precision Land Warfare: The FGM-148 Javelin Assessment

The November 2025 Request for Information by Bangladesh's Directorate General of Defence Purchases for the American FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank guided missile system for the army's special forces and airborne units represents a significant strategic signal as well as a practical capability requirement. The Javelin, which is the American standard issue anti-armor weapon, uses a fire-and-forget top-attack mode that makes it highly effective against even the most heavily armored main battle tanks by striking the thinner top armor. Its use in the Ukraine war by Ukrainian forces against Russian armored vehicles has demonstrated a level of effectiveness that has fundamentally changed assessments of the tank's vulnerability in contested battlespaces.

The acquisition of the Javelin for Bangladesh's special forces and airborne units reflects a specific operational concept: elite infantry units equipped with precision anti-armor weapons that can stop armored columns without requiring the heavy conventional artillery and mechanized forces that Bangladesh lacks. This asymmetric anti-armor concept, in which highly trained infantry with precision weapons deny the mobility advantages of armored forces, is directly consistent with the defensive realism doctrine developed in Chapter Two of this part.

The Javelin acquisition is also politically significant because it would represent Bangladesh's first procurement of an American guided weapons system, establishing a precedent for US-

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh defense industrial cooperation that could open pathways to other American systems. American export approval for the Javelin would require a Foreign Military Sale through the US government, which involves State Department and Congressional notification, and which therefore both signals and strengthens the bilateral defense relationship with the United States. Managing this American relationship alongside the Chinese hardware relationships is precisely the kind of diplomatic juggling that Bangladesh's strategic diversification requires.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES AND IRREGULAR WARFARE DOCTRINE

7.1 The Growing Strategic Importance of Special Operations

Special Operations Forces, defined as military units trained and equipped to conduct a wide range of unusual, sensitive, or politically sensitive military activities that conventional forces are not designed for, have grown dramatically in strategic importance since the 1990s, and their role has been further expanded by the operational experience of the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the demonstration effects of conflicts from Syria to Ukraine. For Bangladesh, whose strategic environment includes non-state armed groups, maritime piracy and trafficking threats, and potential counterterrorism requirements alongside conventional defense, the development of credible Special Operations Forces capability is a genuine priority.

The Forces Goal 2030 documentation records the conversion of two infantry battalions into para commando battalions as a significant achievement, and the establishment of a para commando brigade representing approximately three thousand five hundred personnel as a dedicated special operations capability. This is a reasonable foundation, but it needs to be developed against a clear doctrinal framework that defines what specific tasks the Bangladesh Armed Forces' SOF capability is designed to accomplish.

The taxonomy of special operations missions provides a useful framework. Direct action missions, meaning short-duration strikes and raids to seize or destroy targets of strategic or operational significance, require small units with superior training, equipment, and intelligence support. Special reconnaissance missions, meaning covert collection of intelligence behind adversary lines or in denied areas, require skills in infiltration, observation, and communication. Unconventional warfare, the training, advising, and supporting of indigenous resistance forces, draws directly on the People's War doctrinal heritage and is particularly relevant to the Myanmar border context. Counter-terrorism, meaning the identification, neutralization, or capture of terrorist cells, requires different skills from conventional military operations and must be carefully coordinated with law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Bangladesh's Navy also maintains a special operations capability: the SWADS, or Special Warfare Diving and Salvage unit, which provides the navy with combat diving, underwater demolitions, and maritime counter-terrorism capability. The SWADS model is analogous to the American SEALs and the British Special Boat Service, and its development alongside the army

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

para commando capability creates a growing multi-service special operations capacity that, if properly coordinated through joint doctrine, could provide Bangladesh with disproportionate capability returns relative to investment.

7.2 Irregular Warfare Doctrine: The Gap in Bangladesh's Planning

The Diplomat's December 2024 analysis of Forces Goal 2030 explicitly identified the formulation of an irregular warfare doctrine as one of the new goals that Bangladesh's modernization program should incorporate. This is an important recommendation that reflects a genuine gap in Bangladesh's current doctrinal framework. Despite the People's Warfare tradition and the Liberation War experience with guerrilla operations, Bangladesh has no publicly articulated doctrine for irregular warfare, meaning the conduct of operations in support of or against non-state armed groups, in support of or against resistance movements, or in the ambiguous spaces between conventional military conflict and civil unrest.

The irregular warfare doctrine gap matters for several specific operational challenges that Bangladesh faces or may face. The Myanmar border context, where the Arakan Army controls territory and has demonstrated a willingness to project force across the Naf River, creates scenarios in which Bangladesh might face a non-state armed actor operating with near-state military capabilities. The Chittagong Hill Tracts, where the 1997 Peace Accord has reduced but not eliminated armed activity, presents ongoing challenges for which a clear doctrine of operations short of conventional conflict would be valuable. And the general environment of transnational armed groups operating in the Bay of Bengal and the wider Indian Ocean region, including piracy and maritime terrorism, creates requirements that fall between law enforcement and conventional military operations.

The development of an irregular warfare doctrine for Bangladesh should draw on the experience of other states that have navigated this terrain successfully. Indonesia's experience with separatist conflicts in Aceh and Papua, and its eventual development of a doctrine that combines military operations with political dialogue, social development, and genuine autonomy arrangements, is directly relevant. India's extensive experience with counter-insurgency doctrine in the Northeast and Kashmir, despite its problematic human rights dimensions, contains operational lessons that Bangladesh's military professionals have access to through training exchanges. And the UN's Handbook on Multi-Dimensional Peacekeeping Operations, which Bangladesh's own peacekeeping experience has contributed to developing, provides a framework for thinking about operations in complex environments that combines security, humanitarian, and political dimensions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: JOINT OPERATIONS DOCTRINE AND MULTI-DOMAIN INTEGRATION

8.1 The Theory of Joint Operations: Why Service Integration Is Strategically Essential

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The concept of joint operations, meaning military operations that integrate the capabilities of two or more military services in pursuit of a common operational objective, is one of the most important developments in twentieth century military doctrine. The Second World War demonstrated with brutal clarity that single-service operations, whether land, sea, or air, were invariably less effective than integrated operations that exploited the comparative advantages of each service while compensating for the weaknesses of each. The American Joint Chiefs of Staff system, established by the National Security Act of 1947, institutionalized the joint operations concept at the strategic level. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which gave the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff genuine authority over joint military operations and required officers to serve in joint billets as a condition of promotion to senior ranks, operationalized joint doctrine at the institutional level.

The case for joint operations doctrine is fundamentally about the multiplication of combat power through synergy. An adversary surface fleet threatened simultaneously by submarines from below, by anti-ship missiles from surface vessels and aircraft, by mine fields in its approach routes, and by electronic warfare disrupting its command and communication links faces a far more demanding challenge than one threatened by any single capability. The adversary must simultaneously solve multiple tactical problems in multiple environments, which rapidly exceeds the cognitive and operational capacity of any command structure. This is the essence of what contemporary doctrine calls multi-domain operations: creating multiple simultaneous dilemmas for the adversary across all domains rather than a single solvable problem in one.

For Bangladesh, whose three services have historically developed largely independently with minimal joint doctrine or institutional arrangements, the development of genuine joint operations capability represents both a major challenge and a major opportunity. The challenge is institutional: each service has its own culture, its own budget priorities, its own command structure, and its own conception of how to fight. Integrating these into a coherent joint framework requires both doctrinal development and institutional change that threatens parochial interests. The opportunity is strategic: precisely because Bangladesh cannot match its adversaries' resources, the multiplication effect of joint operations offers the most promising path to credible deterrence within available resources.

8.2 Bangladesh's Joint Doctrine: Current State and Reform Requirements

Bangladesh's current joint doctrine framework is largely aspirational rather than operational. The Armed Forces Division serves as the formal coordination mechanism for the three services, and it has a joint command function in wartime under its statutory mandate. But the practical development of joint doctrine, including common tactical procedures, joint fire coordination, shared situational awareness systems, and the training required to execute joint operations effectively, has lagged far behind the material modernization of the individual services.

The most visible manifestation of this joint doctrine gap is the absence of joint exercises of sufficient scale and complexity to stress-test Bangladesh's ability to coordinate multi-service operations in a realistic scenario. Most Bangladesh Armed Forces training exercises are single-service affairs. The joint exercises that do occur tend to focus on specific functional tasks, such

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, rather than the full range of joint warfighting tasks that a credible defense requires.

The development of a genuine joint doctrine framework requires several specific institutional steps. The Armed Forces Division needs to develop a Joint Doctrine Publication series covering the full range of joint operations: joint fires, joint intelligence, joint logistics, joint air-ground operations, joint maritime operations, and joint special operations. These publications need to be accompanied by a joint training program that takes officers from all three services through exercises designed to develop shared operational understanding. A Joint Operations Center, with permanent staff from all three services trained to plan and coordinate joint operations, needs to be established and properly resourced.

The experience of Australia's joint doctrine development provides an instructive model. Australia's integrated approach to joint operations, developed through the Australian Defence Force's Joint Warfighting Initiative and codified in the Australian Military Doctrine publications, integrated the three services' doctrinal publications into a coherent joint framework without eliminating service-specific doctrine for the environments in which each service operates. The result is an armed force that can coordinate multi-domain operations effectively because its members share a common doctrinal language developed through years of joint training.

8.3 C4ISR: The Nervous System of Modern Joint Operations

Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, collectively C4ISR, is the institutional nervous system through which modern military forces coordinate their activities. In the absence of effective C4ISR, even the most capable weapons systems cannot be brought to bear effectively: sensors that cannot communicate their findings to shooters, commanders who cannot issue orders to units in contact, units that do not share a common operational picture with other units, are military capabilities only in the nominal sense.

Bangladesh's C4ISR investment has been significantly less than its investment in platforms and weapons, creating a growing mismatch between what the armed forces' equipment can do in principle and what it can do in practice given the command and information infrastructure available. The Bangladesh Navy's C4ISR modernization program, which includes a system to connect sixteen platforms including frigates, corvettes, patrol craft, helicopters, maritime patrol aircraft, submarines, and shore stations, represents an important step in addressing the naval dimension of this gap. But the army and air force face equivalent gaps that require equivalent investment.

The cyber dimension of C4ISR adds a further layer of complexity and vulnerability. Modern networked command systems are inherently vulnerable to cyber attack: an adversary that can disrupt Bangladesh's communications networks, inject false information into its operational picture, or deny its commanders the ability to issue orders has effectively disabled the force without firing a shot. The development of robust cyber defenses for military C4ISR systems is therefore not merely a technical requirement but a doctrinal one: doctrine must account for the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

possibility of C4ISR degradation and define how forces operate in degraded communication conditions.

CHAPTER NINE: THE BORDER GUARD BANGLADESH AND THE SECOND LAYER OF TERRITORIAL DEFENSE

9.1 The BGB as a Defense Force: Doctrine and Capability

The Border Guard Bangladesh, formerly known as the Bangladesh Rifles until its renaming following the 2009 BDR mutiny, is the primary agency responsible for the security of Bangladesh's approximately four thousand one hundred and fifty-six kilometers of land borders and its extensive maritime boundary. As The Diplomat's December 2024 analysis noted, the integration of the Border Guard Bangladesh into national defense planning, alongside the Coast Guard, is vital because these forces will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense in case of a national security crisis like war or conflict.

The BGB, with approximately forty thousand personnel organized into battalions stationed along the border, represents a significant security force that currently operates primarily in a law enforcement and border security role but whose wartime mission would expand to include territorial defense functions. The doctrinal integration of the BGB into the army's operational planning framework, alongside the army's ORBAT analysis developed by analysts in April 2025, provides for BGB battalions to serve as territorial defense forces holding border positions while army regular units maneuver as a reserve and counterattack force.

This doctrinal integration reflects sound military reasoning: the BGB's deep local knowledge, its established border positions and infrastructure, and its experience operating in the specific terrain of Bangladesh's borders give it advantages in the defensive role that regular army units would require time to replicate. The BGB's limitations, particularly its lighter armament and training compared to regular infantry, argue for a doctrinal concept that uses BGB in an economy of force role, holding defensible terrain and creating obstacles for adversary advance, while regular army forces provide the mobile striking power for counterattack.

The BGB's performance during the July 2024 uprising, when it was deployed for internal security alongside the police and army, raises questions about its institutional culture and operational focus that are relevant to the reform agenda developed in Part Three. An organization that is routinely deployed for domestic political purposes develops institutional habits and relationships that may compromise its professional effectiveness in its primary border security mission.

9.2 Bangladesh Coast Guard: Expansion and Maritime Security Mission

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh Coast Guard, whose expansion is gaining momentum according to recent reporting that notes new vessel acquisitions, drone systems, and surveillance infrastructure, is the primary agency for maritime law enforcement including fisheries protection, anti-smuggling, and search and rescue in Bangladesh's coastal waters. The Coast Guard's relationship to the Bangladesh Navy and to national defense doctrine is an important question that the Forces Goal 2030 framework addressed imperfectly.

The fundamental doctrinal question is where the boundary between maritime law enforcement, the Coast Guard's primary mission, and maritime defense, the Navy's primary mission, lies in practice. For most states, this boundary is relatively clear in peacetime: law enforcement against criminal activity at sea is a Coast Guard function, while defense against military threats is a Navy function. In wartime or during serious security crises, the Coast Guard typically comes under Navy operational control. Bangladesh should formalize this arrangement through legislation and joint doctrine rather than leaving the wartime relationship undefined, which creates coordination failures at precisely the moment when coordination is most critical.

The Coast Guard's acquisition of surveillance drones and new vessels reflects an appropriate prioritization of maritime domain awareness, which is the foundation of both law enforcement and defense operations at sea. A Coast Guard that cannot detect and monitor vessels in Bangladesh's waters cannot enforce fishing regulations, cannot intercept smugglers, and cannot provide the early warning of potential threats that the Navy requires for its defensive operations. Investment in surveillance capability therefore has a multiplier effect on all maritime security functions.

CHAPTER TEN: FORCE STRUCTURE ANALYSIS AND THE 2026-2040 MODERNIZATION FRAMEWORK

10.1 The 75 Billion Dollar Framework: Strategic Assessment

The proposed seventy-five billion dollar defense modernization program spanning 2026 to 2040, which represents the most ambitious defense investment plan in Bangladesh's history, deserves systematic critical analysis. The figure is enormous by Bangladesh's historical standards: it implies an average annual defense investment of five billion dollars, compared to the current defense budget of approximately three point five billion dollars. Achieving the proposed investment level would require both a significant increase in the defense budget's share of GDP, from the current approximately one point four percent to something closer to two point five percent, and the continued use of foreign loan financing for major acquisitions.

The strategic rationale for this level of investment is defensible in principle. Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone represents an economic asset of enormous value, containing significant hydrocarbon resources and maritime trade routes that underpin Bangladesh's export economy. The capability to protect this asset from interference by either state or non-state actors requires a navy and air force that Bangladesh currently does not possess at credible levels. The

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

conventional military asymmetry with India is so extreme that even doubling Bangladesh's defense investment would barely change the strategic balance, but it would meaningfully improve deterrence in the more limited scenarios of border incidents and coercive diplomacy that are more likely than full-scale war.

The critical analytical questions concern not whether the investment would be strategically useful but whether it is economically sustainable, whether it would be strategically wise given the security dilemma dynamics it might provoke, and whether Bangladesh has the institutional capacity to manage a defense investment program of this scale without the waste and corruption that have historically characterized large defense programs in comparable states.

On economic sustainability, Bangladesh's economic trajectory, which has maintained growth rates exceeding six percent per annum for most of the past decade, suggests that a gradually increasing defense budget share is financially feasible. The question is one of competing priorities: Bangladesh's development requirements, including infrastructure, education, and health care, are enormous, and the political economy of allocating a larger share of national resources to defense rather than development is genuinely complex.

On the security dilemma concern, a doubling of Bangladesh's defense investment over fifteen years would be visible to all regional actors, particularly India. Managing the security dilemma implications requires accompanying the investment with sustained diplomatic engagement that makes clear the defensive orientation of the investment and avoids capability choices that appear offensively threatening from New Delhi's perspective.

On institutional capacity, the defense procurement reforms proposed in Part Three of this textbook are a necessary precondition for a modernization program of this scale. Without competitive procurement, independent audit, and parliamentary oversight, a seventy-five billion dollar program over fifteen years would inevitably generate corruption and waste on a scale that would undermine both the program's strategic objectives and public confidence in the defense establishment.

10.2 The World Defence Show 2026: Bangladesh's Growing Indigenous Defense Profile

Bangladesh's participation in the World Defence Show 2026 in Riyadh, where the Bangladesh Army showcased a wide range of domestically manufactured defense products, represents both a marketing effort and a strategic statement about the direction of Bangladesh's defense industrial ambitions. The show appearance reflects genuine progress: the Khulna Shipyard's production of Durjoy-class and Padma-class patrol craft, the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory's production of small arms, personal protective equipment, and military vehicles, and the BARDC's aircraft prototypes all represent real indigenous capability that deserves international recognition.

More strategically important is the signal the Riyadh appearance sends to potential defense partners and customers. Bangladesh's ambition to become a regional defense industry player, rather than merely a consumer of other nations' military products, positions it as a potential participant in Gulf states' defense procurement, particularly for the patrol craft and smaller

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

vessels that Bangladesh can now produce competitively. The Gulf states' enormous defense budgets and their preference for diversifying away from exclusive dependence on American and European suppliers creates an opportunity that Bangladesh's growing maritime industrial capacity could exploit.

The BMTF-HIT Joint Venture talks reported in early February 2026, involving Bangladesh's Machine Tools Factory and what appears to be Pakistan's Heavy Industries Taxila, signal another potential industrial cooperation that, if realized, would further diversify Bangladesh's defense industrial relationships and potentially give it access to Pakistani-developed technologies including, most significantly, the JF-17 fighter's production expertise.

10.3 The Reserve Force Concept: Economic Analysis and Doctrinal Assessment

The NCP's proposal for a reserve force of six hundred thousand personnel, double the size of the regular armed forces, is the most ambitious single force structure proposal in Bangladesh's recent political debate and deserves serious doctrinal and economic analysis. The proposal draws on the Finnish and South Korean models examined in Part Two, both of which maintain large reserve forces relative to active duty strength.

The strategic logic is sound: a reserve force provides strategic depth that no regular army of affordable size can provide. An adversary contemplating military action against Bangladesh must calculate not just the initial military cost of defeating the regular forces, which given the asymmetry with larger neighbors might be militarily feasible, but the subsequent cost of occupying and pacifying a country of one hundred and seventy million people, a significant proportion of whom have military training. This is the essence of the deterrence by denial approach when the defending force cannot match the attacker in regular force terms.

The economic analysis is more complex. A reserve force of six hundred thousand personnel requires a recurring investment in training, equipment maintenance, mobilization infrastructure, and administrative management that is significant even if much less per person than active duty costs. Finland, whose reserve system is often cited as the model, spends approximately four thousand euros per reservist per year on training and readiness maintenance. Applying a comparable figure to Bangladesh's proposed six hundred thousand person reserve, adjusted for Bangladesh's lower cost base, would imply an additional defense expenditure of perhaps one to two billion dollars per year, a significant commitment but not implausible within the 2026-2040 modernization framework.

The doctrinal integration of the reserve force with the regular army and the BGB requires careful planning. The three-tier concept that emerges from the analysis, with regular army providing mobile striking power and special capabilities, BGB providing border defense, and reserves providing territorial defense depth and strategic manpower pool, is a coherent force structure concept that could be developed into a comprehensive doctrine for national defense. What it requires, beyond the individual component policies, is a unifying Joint Defense Architecture document that specifies how the three tiers interact, how mobilization occurs, and how command authority is organized across the tiers in various scenarios from low-level incidents through full national mobilization.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER ELEVEN: DOCTRINE FOR THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

11.1 Information Warfare and Bangladesh's Vulnerability

The information environment has become a central dimension of modern military competition, and Bangladesh's vulnerability in this domain is one of the most under-discussed aspects of its defense situation. Information warfare encompasses a wide range of activities: the deliberate manipulation of information available to an adversary's decision-makers; the disruption of the adversary's information infrastructure; the use of social media and mass communication to shape public opinion in the adversary's population; and the protection of one's own decision-makers and public from similar manipulation.

Bangladesh's specific vulnerabilities in the information domain are significant. Bangladesh has one of the highest social media penetration rates in Asia relative to its economic level, with over sixty million Facebook users as of 2025, creating both an opportunity for the rapid dissemination of information and a potential vector for adversary information operations. The political polarization that has characterized Bangladesh's political environment for decades, and which the July Revolution has partially reconfigured rather than resolved, creates a receptive environment for information operations that amplify existing social divisions.

The documented experience of Indian and Pakistani information operations in the context of the May 2025 India-Pakistan military confrontation, which involved extensive social media manipulation, fake news dissemination, and coordinated narrative operations alongside conventional military and economic pressure, provides a direct warning about what Bangladesh might face in a crisis scenario. Bangladesh's own experience with social media disinformation during the July 2024 uprising, when both sides of the political conflict used information manipulation, demonstrates the vulnerability that any external actor could seek to exploit.

The doctrinal response to this vulnerability requires capability development in both offensive and defensive information operations. The defensive dimension requires media literacy programs that increase public resilience to disinformation; robust fact-checking and counter-narrative infrastructure; protection of government communication systems against cyber intrusion; and training of military and civilian officials in information security practices. The offensive dimension, which Bangladesh has largely neglected, requires the development of strategic communication capabilities that allow Bangladesh to shape the information environment in its region rather than merely responding to others' initiatives.

11.2 Psychological Operations Doctrine

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Psychological operations, or PSYOPS, are a recognized military function with a long history and a specific doctrinal framework. They involve the deliberate use of planned messages to influence the perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of specific target audiences in ways that advance the strategic objectives of the force conducting them.

Bangladesh's military establishment currently maintains what the ORBAT analyses describe as a PSYOPS capability within the General Headquarters structure. But the development of an effective PSYOPS capability requires more than a unit designation: it requires a doctrine that defines target audiences, objectives, approved message themes, authorized communication channels, and integration procedures with other military and diplomatic operations. It also requires, in a democratic context, a legal and ethical framework that distinguishes between legitimate strategic communication, which is the transparent advocacy of Bangladesh's positions and interests, and manipulation, which involves deception and the exploitation of vulnerabilities in ways that would be inconsistent with democratic values.

The distinction matters particularly in the context of domestic operations. Military psychological operations directed at Bangladesh's own citizens are categorically different from those directed at adversary populations, and the legal framework must clearly prohibit the former while authorizing the latter within appropriate constraints. The documented history of Bangladesh's security forces using information manipulation for domestic political purposes makes this constraint particularly important.

CHAPTER TWELVE: STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND FORCE DESIGN SYNTHESIS

12.1 Matching Capability to Strategy: The Integration Test

The ultimate test of military doctrine and force structure design is the integration test: do the capability investments being made actually support the strategic objectives being pursued? Applying this test to Bangladesh's current defense trajectory reveals both areas of coherence and areas of significant mismatch.

The strategic objective of conventional deterrence against potential adversaries is served by the ongoing investment in anti-ship missiles for the navy, precision artillery systems for the army, and the proposed advanced fighter aircraft for the air force. These investments create the asymmetric cost-imposition capabilities that conventional deterrence requires, and they are reasonably well-matched to the strategic objective.

The strategic objective of maritime sovereignty protection is served by the naval expansion program, particularly the three-dimensional force concept, the submarine expansion negotiations, and the indigenous frigate program. The BNS Pekua submarine base gives this investment the operational infrastructure it requires. These investments are coherent and well-directed, though significantly delayed relative to requirements.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The strategic objective of information security and cyber defense is served by the Cyber Safety Ordinance 2025 and the civilian cyber defense framework, but the military cyber defense capability remains underdeveloped and underfunded. This is a strategic mismatch that could prove costly.

The strategic objective of strategic autonomy and reduced dependence on any single supplier is served by the procurement diversification strategy across China, Turkey, Japan, Italy, South Korea, and potentially the United States. But the industrial policy dimension of this diversification, the development of indigenous capability to reduce dependence over time, is served only partially by the CETC UAV agreement and the indigenous shipbuilding program. A more comprehensive industrial strategy is required.

The strategic objective of democratic accountability and public trust in the defense establishment is served by none of the capability investment currently underway. Without the legislative reforms proposed in Part Three, the capability investment risks reproducing the accountability failures of the Hasina era in a more capable and therefore more dangerous military framework.

12.2 The Doctrinal White Paper: A Proposal

The analysis developed throughout this part leads to a single overriding recommendation: Bangladesh needs a Defense Doctrine White Paper, publicly available, regularly updated, and developed through a consultative process that includes Parliament, civil society, and the academic and strategic studies community.

This document would articulate Bangladesh's official military doctrine across the dimensions covered in this part: the strategic concept, the force employment principles, the joint operations framework, the capability planning methodology, and the relationship between military doctrine and national security strategy. Its public nature would serve multiple governance purposes: it would subject doctrinal choices to democratic scrutiny; it would inform the defense budget debate by connecting specific expenditure items to specific doctrinal requirements; it would signal Bangladesh's strategic intentions to regional partners and adversaries; and it would provide the stable doctrinal framework within which procurement, training, and organizational decisions can be made coherently.

The doctrinal White Paper should be preceded by the National Security Strategy proposed in Part Three, since doctrine is operationally specific expression of strategy and cannot be developed coherently without the strategic framework it is meant to serve. Together, the National Security Strategy and the Defense Doctrine White Paper would provide Bangladesh's first comprehensive public framework for understanding what its armed forces are for, how they are designed to accomplish their missions, and how those missions connect to the national interests of the Bangladeshi people.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CONCLUSION TO PART FOUR: THE ARCHITECTURE OF A CAPABLE AND ACCOUNTABLE DEFENSE

This part has examined the theory and practice of military doctrine, force structure, and capability development as applied to Bangladesh's specific strategic environment and resource constraints. Its central argument is that Bangladesh's ongoing military modernization, while representing genuine progress on multiple fronts, lacks the doctrinal coherence and the governance framework necessary to translate investment into strategic effect.

The military technical achievements of Forces Goal 2030, the three-corps army structure, the three-dimensional navy, the advancing air power modernization, the nascent indigenous defense industrial capacity, are real and should be recognized as such. Bangladesh in 2026 is a significantly more capable military power than it was in 2009 when the modernization process began. The proposed 2026-2040 program, if realized with anything approaching its stated ambition and with the procurement integrity that its scale demands, could produce a military establishment that provides genuinely credible deterrence against the full range of threats Bangladesh faces.

What is missing, and what the synthesis of this part has sought to provide, is the doctrinal architecture that connects these material investments to a coherent strategic concept. Without that architecture, Bangladesh risks spending an enormous amount of national treasure on capabilities that are not integrated into a coherent deterrent posture, that are not procured through processes that ensure value for money and strategic coherence, and that are not accountable to the democratic institutions that represent the sovereignty in whose name they are maintained.

The path forward requires simultaneous progress on the material, doctrinal, and governance dimensions. Capability investment without doctrinal coherence produces waste. Doctrinal coherence without governance accountability produces institutional autonomy incompatible with democratic principles. Governance reform without capability investment produces legitimate but impotent institutions. Bangladesh needs all three dimensions, and it needs them in the right sequence: governance reform creates the foundation on which doctrinal development can be honestly conducted, and doctrinal clarity provides the framework within which capability investment can be strategically directed.

This is the argument that runs through all four parts of this textbook, and that Part Five will develop further as it turns to the economic dimensions of defense policy, the political economy of military spending, and the relationship between development and defense in a state that must be both secure and prosperous to fulfill its democratic promise.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FOUR

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Primary and Official Sources

Bangladesh Army Wartime ORBAT Overview 2025. bdmilitary.com, April 2025.

Bangladesh Air Force Wikipedia Article. Updated April 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh_Air_Force

Bangladesh Navy Wikipedia Article. Updated February 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangladesh_Navy

Forces Goal 2030 Wikipedia Article. Updated February 2026. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forces_Goal_2030

Bangladesh Army and Border Guard Bangladesh Wartime ORBAT Integration. bdmilitary.com, April 2025.

Bangladesh Army ORBAT under FG2030. bdmilitary.com, 2025.

Academic and Strategic Analysis Sources

Bhattacharya, Amit. Bangladesh's 75 Billion Dollar Defence Modernisation Proposal 2026-2040. bdmilitary.com, June 2025.

BNP Outlines Plan to Reshape Armed Forces and Develop Indigenous Defence Industry. bdmilitary.com, February 2026.

BNP's Defence Imperative. bdmilitary.com, February 2026.

Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Douhet, Giulio. The Command of the Air. Washington: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998 (orig. 1921).

Faruque, Taufiq E. and Rubiat Saimum. Bangladesh's Defence Diversification and Pivot to Networked Security. 9dashline, February 2026.

Giap, Vo Nguyen. People's War, People's Army. Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961.

Ideal Defence Policy for Bangladesh by 2040. bdmilitary.com, April 2025.

Luttwak, Edward. Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783. Boston: Little, Brown, 1890.

Rahman, M.Z. A Three-Tier Air Force for Bangladesh: Why EFT, J-10CE and JF-17 Block III Actually Make Sense. bdmilitary.com, January 2026.

Reiter, Dan and Allan Stam. Democracies at War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Revisiting Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh's Military Modernization Plan Under the New Government. The Diplomat, December 2024.

Sun Tzu. The Art of War. Translated by Samuel Griffith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.

United States Army. Multi-Domain Operations: The Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, 2018.

United States Department of Defense. 2022 National Defense Strategy. Washington: DoD, 2022.

Recent News and Analysis Sources (2024-2026)

Army Recognition. Bangladesh to Procure Six Improved KSS-I Submarines from South Korea. May 2025.

Army Recognition. Bangladesh to Purchase 20 Chinese J-10CE Fighter Jets in 2.2 Billion Defense Deal. 2025.

Bangladesh Navy 2026: 89 Ships, Fleet and Strength. globalmilitary.net, 2026.

Defence News. Bangladesh Air Force Gets Nod to Spend Billions on Multirole Fighters. October 2025.

Defence Security Asia. Bangladesh Close to 2.2 Billion Deal for 20 Chinese J-10CE Fighter Jets. October 2025.

The Week. Bongosagar 2025: India Bangladesh Navies Sharpen Combat Edge in Bay of Bengal. March 2025.

TRT World. Bangladesh Signs Defence Deal with China to Start Manufacturing Drones Locally. January 2026.

bdmilitary.com. Bangladesh Army Showcases Indigenous Defence Products at World Defence Show 2026. February 2026.

End of Part Four

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Five will examine the political economy of defense, including defense budgeting, the relationship between economic development and military capability, the defense industry's economic dimensions, the governance of military business enterprises, and the fiscal framework for the 2026-2040 modernization program.

PART FIVE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE, MILITARY BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE FISCAL ARCHITECTURE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART FIVE

There is a persistent and deeply misleading assumption in popular discourse about defense policy, namely that military spending exists in a separate universe from economic development, that guns and butter are necessarily opposing choices, and that the relationship between a nation's security apparatus and its economy is primarily one of extraction. In this assumption, defense budgets are drains on national productive capacity, military establishments are consumers rather than producers, and every taka spent on a tank or a frigate is a taka not spent on a hospital or a school.

This assumption is not merely incomplete. It is analytically wrong in ways that produce serious policy errors. The relationship between defense and economic development is one of the most complex, contested, and consequential domains in the entire field of political economy. Getting it right, or getting it substantially wrong, shapes the trajectory of nations in ways that persist across generations.

Bangladesh in 2026 faces this set of questions with a particular urgency that few other states of comparable size and development level must confront simultaneously. The country is conducting the largest military modernization in its history, spending approximately 3.34 billion USD annually on defense at official budget levels and considerably more when off-budget and quasi-governmental military enterprise revenues are accounted for. It is doing so during a period of fiscal stress, inflationary pressure, and post-political-transition uncertainty. It is doing so in a geopolitical environment that demands military capability while also demanding the economic diplomacy and development performance that gives a state weight in international deliberations.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

It is doing so, moreover, while managing a military establishment that has evolved far beyond the boundaries of a purely security function. The Bangladesh Armed Forces, through a complex web of welfare trusts, development corporations, business enterprises, and infrastructure management roles, have become one of the largest economic actors in the country. The strategic, governance, and democratic accountability dimensions of this economic role are among the most pressing and least adequately analyzed questions in Bangladeshi public policy.

Part Five of this textbook confronts these questions directly. It examines the theoretical frameworks through which political economists understand the defense-development relationship. It analyzes the specific structures of Bangladesh's defense budget, its composition, its limitations, and its relationship to the actual cost of maintaining and modernizing the Bangladesh Armed Forces. It investigates the political economy of military business enterprises, drawing on comparative literature from Pakistan, Indonesia, Turkey, and other states where militaries have developed substantial commercial interests. It analyzes the emerging Defense Economic Zone initiative and the broader project of defense industrialization as an economic development strategy. It examines Bangladesh's position as the world's leading troop-contributing nation to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the complex economic, strategic, and diplomatic dimensions of that role. And it develops a framework for understanding what a fiscally responsible, strategically coherent, and democratically accountable defense economy might look like in Bangladesh through the 2026 to 2040 period.

The argument that runs through all of these analyses is unified and direct. Economic and security dimensions of national policy cannot be treated as independent variables. A Bangladesh that is economically dynamic but militarily vulnerable is not secure. A Bangladesh that is militarily capable but economically stagnant cannot sustain that capability over time and will find that the social foundations of its security gradually erode. And a Bangladesh in which the military establishment functions as an unaccountable economic empire, drawing resources from both public budgets and private commercial operations without adequate democratic oversight, is a Bangladesh in which the very concept of democratic security governance remains a contradiction in terms.

The path forward requires a political economy of defense that is theoretically sophisticated, historically informed, institutionally realistic, and normatively clear about the values it is designed to serve.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORIES OF THE DEFENSE-DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIP

1.1 The Classical Guns-Versus-Butter Framing and Its Limitations

The guns-versus-butter model, which is essentially a production possibilities frontier application to national resource allocation, captures something real and important. Resources are finite. Money spent on military hardware is money not directly available for education, healthcare, or

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

infrastructure investment. In a resource-constrained developing economy like Bangladesh, where the national budget faces simultaneous demands from a population of over 170 million people with enormous developmental needs, this opportunity cost dimension of defense spending is not trivial.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's data places Bangladesh's military expenditure at approximately 1.02 percent of gross domestic product as of 2023, a figure that has remained remarkably stable over multiple years. This is low by almost any comparative benchmark. NATO members are expected to spend at least two percent of GDP on defense. India allocates approximately 2.1 percent of GDP to defense, Pakistan around 3.5 percent, and China maintains official defense spending at approximately 1.6 percent of GDP though analysts routinely estimate the true figure to be considerably higher. The SIPRI figures for 2024 show Bangladesh's military expenditure rising to approximately 4.03 billion USD, representing a modest real increase from 3.78 billion in 2023. The official 2025-26 budget of 40,698 crore taka, approximately 3.34 billion USD at prevailing exchange rates, actually represents a slight nominal decrease from the previous year's allocation, offset by inflation that continues to run at elevated levels.

What the guns-versus-butter framing misses, however, is the complex set of feedback effects that run in both directions between security provision and economic performance. A state that cannot provide basic security for its territory, its trade routes, and its citizens cannot attract the investment, sustain the trade, or maintain the institutional stability that economic development requires. The destruction of productive capacity in war is economically devastating in ways that dwarf any peacetime defense budget. The maintenance of a minimally credible deterrent is, from this perspective, an investment in the stability conditions that economic growth requires rather than a subtraction from it.

The classical development economics literature was largely silent on this feedback loop. The great theorists of economic development in the postwar period, from W. Arthur Lewis's dual-sector model through the Harrod-Domar growth equations, Rostow's stages of growth, and the subsequent dependency theory critiques, treated security as either a background condition or an irrelevance. The catastrophic conflicts that engulfed post-colonial states from Nigeria to Vietnam to Bangladesh itself in 1971 forced a reckoning with this omission, but the field of development economics has never fully integrated the security dimension into its analytical framework.

1.2 The Defense-Economic Growth Nexus: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Debates

The academic literature on the relationship between military spending and economic growth is both substantial and deeply inconclusive. This inconclusiveness is itself informative: it means that the relationship is not simple, not uniform across contexts, and not amenable to the kind of general prescriptions that policymakers often want.

The most cited early work in this area is Emile Benoit's 1973 study of thirty-three developing countries, which found a positive correlation between defense spending and economic growth during the 1950-1965 period. Benoit's explanation for this counterintuitive finding drew on the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

supply-side benefits of military investment: defense establishments provide infrastructure, including roads, ports, and telecommunications; train workers in technical and organizational skills; conduct research and development that generates civilian spinoffs; and provide a stable institutional environment for economic activity. This argument, sometimes called the modernization hypothesis, was influential in justifying military spending in the development context during the Cold War era.

The Benoit findings have been extensively criticized and partially debunked in subsequent literature. Methodologically, the positive correlation he found was likely partly an artifact of the particular time period examined and the countries included. Subsequent studies using longer time series, different country samples, and more sophisticated statistical techniques have found mixed results: some finding positive effects, some negative effects, and many finding no consistent relationship across different development contexts.

A more theoretically sophisticated literature has moved beyond simple correlation toward analyzing the mechanisms through which defense spending might affect economic growth. On the positive side, these mechanisms include the infrastructure and human capital development effects Benoit identified, along with technological spillovers, demand stimulus in recessions, and the productivity-enhancing effects of an orderly and secure economic environment. On the negative side, they include the crowding out of private investment through higher interest rates or competition for scarce skilled workers, the misallocation of research capacity toward military rather than civilian applications, the direct opportunity cost of foregone social investment, and the potential for militarily powerful states to be drawn into costly conflicts that destroy economic capacity.

The work of econometric researchers like Steve Chan, Alex Mintz, and Michael Ward in the 1980s and 1990s established that the net effect of these competing mechanisms varies systematically with the level of economic development, the type of political system, the composition of military spending, the external threat environment, and the quality of civilian institutions through which defense resources flow. For Bangladesh specifically, this conditionality is crucial: the same nominal defense budget could produce positive or negative economic effects depending on how it is structured, how procurement decisions are made, whether military enterprises compete with or complement private sector activity, and whether the institutional framework governing defense spending generates or destroys trust in public institutions.

1.3 The Public Choice Theory of Military Spending

Public choice economics, associated with James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock, and their colleagues at the Virginia School, offers a different and in many respects more illuminating framework for understanding actual defense budgets than either the Keynesian macro-models or the growth correlation literature. Where conventional welfare economics asks what the optimal level of defense spending would be from a social welfare perspective, public choice theory asks what political economy mechanisms actually determine defense budget outcomes, and why these outcomes so consistently diverge from any plausible optimum.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The public choice analysis of military spending identifies several systematic distortions that inflate defense budgets beyond socially optimal levels in both democratic and authoritarian contexts. First, there is the problem of concentrated interests versus diffuse costs. Defense contractors, military service branches, and the communities that host military bases all have strong concentrated incentives to lobby for higher defense spending, while the costs of that spending are diffused across the entire taxpaying population in ways that create minimal political resistance per individual taxpayer. This asymmetry systematically biases budget outcomes toward overspending on defense relative to what an idealized social welfare analysis would recommend.

Second, there is the national security externality problem. Because defense decisions involve classified information that is unavailable to the public, legislators, and even much of the executive branch, the normal mechanisms of democratic accountability over government spending are substantially weakened in the defense domain. This information asymmetry creates opportunities for what economists call principal-agent problems: the agents responsible for delivering defense capability, the military services and their contractors, have informational advantages over the principals, the civilian government and ultimately the public, that they can exploit to advance institutional interests that may diverge from public interests.

Third, there is the ratchet effect in military spending identified by political scientists from the 1960s onward. Defense budgets are easy to increase during periods of perceived threat and extremely difficult to reduce when threats diminish, because the institutional interests created by high spending are powerful enough to resist the political momentum for cuts. Bangladesh's experience illustrates this dynamic: the defense budget grew substantially during the Forces Goal 2030 modernization period and has shown remarkable stickiness even during the fiscal austerity of the post-July Revolution period under the interim government.

For Bangladesh, the public choice analysis has specific and important implications. The Armed Forces Division's institutional position, reporting directly to the Prime Minister's Office rather than through the Ministry of Defense, creates a structural information asymmetry that makes effective civilian oversight of defense spending extraordinarily difficult. The military's extensive commercial interests, to be examined in detail in Chapter Three of this Part, create concentrated institutional interests in maintaining and expanding the resource base of the armed forces that go well beyond the security function. And the classification of major procurement decisions removes them from public scrutiny in ways that enable the kinds of rent-seeking behavior that public choice theory predicts will systematically inflate costs and reduce efficiency.

1.4 The Political Economy of Arms Imports in Developing States

Bangladesh imports the overwhelming majority of its major defense equipment, making the political economy of arms procurement an important dimension of the broader defense-development relationship. The academic literature on arms transfers in the developing world has identified several patterns that are directly relevant to Bangladesh's situation.

The first is the supplier-buyer relationship asymmetry. Arms suppliers, whether states or corporations, possess enormous informational advantages over buyers regarding the technical

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

capabilities, reliability, maintenance requirements, and true lifecycle costs of the systems they are selling. In combination with the information restrictions imposed by classification, this asymmetry creates conditions in which buyers regularly overpay for equipment, accept systems that do not perform as advertised, and commit to maintenance and upgrade contracts that create long-term dependency on the original supplier. Andrew Feinstein's meticulous documentation of arms corruption in The Shadow World (2011) illustrates these dynamics with devastating precision, drawing on cases from South Africa to Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh's own regional context.

The second pattern is the geopolitical dimension of arms supply relationships. Major arms suppliers, particularly China, Russia, and the United States, use defense exports as instruments of foreign policy: building relationships with recipient militaries, creating institutional dependencies, signaling strategic partnerships, and sometimes conditioning supply on policy concessions. For Bangladesh, which has pursued a deliberate diversification strategy across Chinese, Turkish, Korean, Italian, and potentially American suppliers, this geopolitical dimension is a constant background condition. China's dominant position as Bangladesh's primary arms supplier, accounting for more than two-thirds of major defense equipment by value, creates a structural relationship that transcends any individual procurement decision.

The third pattern is the domestic political economy of arms decisions. Major procurement decisions create winners and losers within the domestic political economy: military service branches competing for budget share, companies in the supply chain of different procurement options, and political constituencies associated with different strategic alignments. In Bangladesh, the shift in procurement emphasis toward Turkey that followed the July 2024 Revolution, motivated partly by Turkey's strong diplomatic relations with the interim government and shared Islamic solidarity framing, reflects exactly this kind of political economy dynamic in which strategic and economic considerations are intertwined with political relationships and institutional preferences.

1.5 Comparative Political Economy of Military Economies in South Asia

The comparative literature on military economies in South Asia provides essential context for understanding Bangladesh's specific situation. Three cases are particularly illuminating: Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. Each represents a different point on the spectrum of military-economic integration, and each offers both positive lessons and cautionary warnings for Bangladeshi policymakers.

Pakistan represents the extreme end of military-economic integration in the South Asian context. Pakistan's military, through the Fauji Foundation, Army Welfare Trust, Shaheen Foundation, and Bahria Foundation, operates what is probably the largest military-commercial complex in the developing world outside of China. The combined business interests of these entities, spanning manufacturing, banking, insurance, real estate, agriculture, telecommunications, and energy, have assets estimated in the tens of billions of dollars. The Fauji Foundation alone is among the largest conglomerates in Pakistan, producing everything from fertilizer to cereals to Frooti fruit drink. This extraordinary level of commercial engagement has generated serious structural pathologies: Pakistan's military has become an economic interest group with a direct stake in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

maintaining its institutional power and resource base, creating incentives for political interference that have repeatedly distorted Pakistani democratic governance. The model is both cautionary and revealing, because Bangladesh's military commercial enterprises follow a path originally established precisely by the Pakistani Fauji Foundation, whose East Pakistan branch became the founding institution of what is now Sena Kalyan Sangstha.

India represents a different but also instructive model. The Indian military has maintained a more limited commercial footprint than either Pakistan or Bangladesh, partly because India's much stronger civilian institutional tradition has provided more effective constraints on military entrepreneurialism. The Defence Public Sector Undertakings, or DPSUs, which include Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, Bharat Electronics, Bharat Dynamics, and others, are formally civilian enterprises under the Ministry of Defence rather than military-run businesses, and they are subject to more conventional forms of corporate governance and parliamentary oversight. India's experience demonstrates that a state-directed defense industrial base can be built without the same accountability deficits that characterize militarily-run commercial enterprises, though it also demonstrates the limitations of a purely state-directed model that has historically produced equipment of mediocre quality and at excessive cost compared to private sector alternatives.

Sri Lanka's experience offers a more specific warning. The Sri Lankan military's commercial enterprises, expanded significantly during the post-2009 conflict period when the military was at the height of its institutional power, became vectors for corruption and misuse of public resources that were eventually implicated in the broader governance crisis that contributed to the 2022 economic collapse and popular uprising. The international community's concerns about Sri Lankan military governance, including scrutiny of the accountability of military business enterprises, became a significant diplomatic and economic liability for Colombo. Bangladesh's interim government, operating under significant international scrutiny following the July 2024 Revolution and the questions it raised about the previous government's governance record, would do well to note how military commercial enterprises can become both governance liabilities and diplomatic vulnerabilities.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE BUDGET

2.1 The Formal Budget Structure: What Is Official and What Is Hidden

The formal structure of Bangladesh's defense budget, as presented in the annual national budget documents, is deceptively straightforward. The Ministry of Defense receives an annual allocation divided between operational expenses and development expenses, with a separate allocation to the Armed Forces Division for administrative operations, and further allocations to other defense-related entities. For the fiscal year 2025-26, this formal structure yields a headline figure of 40,698 crore taka, approximately 3.34 billion USD at prevailing exchange rates.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This headline figure is, however, considerably less informative than it appears. The formal defense budget as presented in parliamentary documents substantially understates the total resource flow to the defense establishment for several interrelated reasons.

The first and most straightforward reason is that major procurement under Forces Goal 2030 has been financed through mechanisms that do not appear in the regular defense budget. Government-to-government loan agreements with China, bilateral credit arrangements with Turkey, and special purpose financing vehicles for specific procurement programs have been the primary financing mechanisms for the large platforms, the submarines, frigates, fighter aircraft, and missile systems that constitute the modernization program's most expensive elements. These commitments represent contingent liabilities of the Bangladeshi state that are not reflected in the annual defense budget allocation but that create binding future expenditure obligations with significant macroeconomic implications.

The second reason involves the revenues and expenditures of the military's commercial enterprises. The Sena Kalyan Sangstha, Army Welfare Trust, Air Force Welfare Trust, Navy Welfare Trust, and associated entities generate revenues from their commercial operations that flow back into the military establishment through various channels including welfare payments, facility construction, equipment purchases, and institutional development funding. These commercial revenues constitute an off-budget resource flow to the defense sector that is neither captured in the formal budget presentation nor subject to the same parliamentary oversight processes that govern the formal budget.

The third reason is the classification of certain security-related expenditures. Bangladesh's National Security Intelligence and Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, along with elements of the Special Security Force, receive funding through mechanisms that are partially or entirely outside the public budget disclosure framework. Estimating the scale of these classified allocations is, by definition, impossible from publicly available information.

The fourth reason involves the economic value of resources provided to the military in kind or at below-market cost. The military's access to land for cantonments, training areas, and business enterprises is provided at terms that would not be available to civilian enterprises and represents a significant subsidy whose economic value is not captured in budget figures. Similarly, the use of military labor for commercial construction and infrastructure projects, in which soldiers provide labor at military wage rates for construction activities that generate commercial revenues, represents a resource transfer whose budgetary implications are opaque.

Taking all of these factors together, analysts who have attempted comprehensive estimates of total resource flows to Bangladesh's defense establishment have suggested that the true economic footprint of the sector may be two to three times the official budget figure. This gap between official and total defense expenditure is not unique to Bangladesh: it is characteristic of defense sectors in developing states with significant military commercial enterprises and off-budget procurement financing. But the scale of the gap in Bangladesh's case is large enough to be a serious concern for fiscal transparency and democratic accountability.

2.2 Budget Composition: The Operational-Capital Imbalance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The composition of Bangladesh's official defense budget reveals a structural problem that has been consistently noted by analysts but inadequately addressed by successive governments. The overwhelming majority of the official defense allocation goes to operational expenses, primarily salaries, allowances, and routine maintenance, while a disproportionately small share is allocated to capital investment in the form of development expenditure.

For 2025-26, the breakdown shows approximately 37,812 crore taka allocated to operational costs and only 916 crore taka to development expenses, a ratio of approximately 41 to 1 in favor of operations over capital investment. This ratio is extraordinarily tilted toward consumption and away from investment compared to international benchmarks. Most military establishments in states conducting active modernization programs allocate at least twenty to thirty percent of their formal defense budget to capital expenditure; Bangladesh's formal capital allocation represents barely two percent of the official defense budget.

This imbalance has several important implications. First, it demonstrates that the actual capital investment in the modernization program is being financed largely through off-budget mechanisms, the government-to-government loans and bilateral credit arrangements noted above, rather than through the formal budget. This off-budget financing keeps the apparent budget deficit artificially low but creates hidden debt obligations with potentially significant macroeconomic consequences when they become due for servicing.

Second, the high operational cost proportion reflects a military establishment whose personnel costs have grown substantially as headcount has expanded under Forces Goal 2030. The Bangladesh Army alone has grown from approximately 145,000 personnel in 2009 to an estimated 160,000 to 185,000 personnel by 2025. Each additional soldier represents a permanent increase in salary, pension, and welfare obligations that constrain the budget's flexibility for capital investment. This personnel expansion dynamic is one of the most important structural features of Bangladesh's defense economy and one of the least publicly discussed.

Third, the operational-capital imbalance creates serious readiness problems even for equipment already in inventory. A military that cannot adequately fund maintenance and spare parts for existing equipment, because its budget is consumed by personnel costs, will see its operational capability degraded over time regardless of how impressively its procurement program appears on paper. Bangladesh's air force, in particular, has faced documented readiness challenges related to inadequate maintenance funding for its aging fleet, a problem that expensive new procurement will not solve if the structural budget imbalance is not addressed.

2.3 The 2025-26 Defense Budget: Austerity, Political Context, and Strategic Implications

The interim government's decision to present a 2025-26 defense budget that actually reduced the nominal defense allocation, from 42,014 crore taka in the previous year to 40,698 crore taka, was strategically significant in ways that go beyond the specific numbers involved. The decision represented the first nominal reduction in Bangladesh's official defense budget in many years, and it occurred precisely in the year when the most expensive elements of the Forces Goal 2030 and potential successor program were supposedly approaching fruition.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The political context of this decision is important. The Muhammad Yunus-led interim government, having come to power as a consequence of a popular uprising that was substantially animated by anger at corruption and misuse of public resources, faced strong pressure to demonstrate fiscal responsibility and prioritization of public welfare over military spending. The defense budget reduction served this political purpose even as the military modernization program nominally continued through off-budget financing channels.

At the same time, the interim government faced a dilemma characteristic of all transitional governments: it needed the institutional support of the military establishment to maintain the basic order and credibility without which no transitional process can succeed, but it also needed to assert civilian authority over the military in ways that reassured both domestic and international observers about the direction of the transition. A defense budget reduction that was modest enough not to seriously impair military capability while being visible enough to signal fiscal discipline represented a careful calibration of these competing pressures.

Defense analysts and armed forces planners had anticipated an increase to at least 55,000 crore taka, which would have represented a substantial real increase and signaled serious commitment to the 2026-2040 modernization program. The actual budget fell approximately 14,000 crore short of these expectations, a shortfall large enough to delay or cancel significant procurement decisions unless alternative off-budget financing is arranged. The strategic risk is that procurement timelines will slip, capability gaps will widen, and the credibility of the modernization commitment will be called into question by potential adversaries, arms suppliers, and international partners.

The macro-fiscal context provides additional important background. Bangladesh's fiscal position in 2025-26 was constrained by the need to service the debt obligations accumulated during the Hasina government's major infrastructure investment program, by the economic disruptions associated with the political transition, by continuing inflationary pressure, and by the challenging external environment including reduced export revenues and remittance volatility. The International Monetary Fund program that Bangladesh entered provided some fiscal discipline but also constrained the government's room to expand the deficit through increased defense spending.

2.4 Comparative Defense Budget Analysis: Where Does Bangladesh Stand?

Placing Bangladesh's defense budget in comparative perspective illuminates both its adequacy and its limitations as a foundation for the security ambitions implicit in Forces Goal 2030 and its successor programs.

At 1.02 percent of GDP, Bangladesh's official defense spending ratio is among the lowest in its immediate strategic neighborhood. Myanmar, despite its economic devastation from the civil war, allocates a much higher percentage of its diminished GDP to the military. India's 2.1 percent ratio, applied to an economy roughly twelve times the size of Bangladesh's, yields a defense budget of approximately 72 billion USD, twenty times Bangladesh's total official defense expenditure. China's official defense budget exceeds 200 billion USD. Even within the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

South Asian economic development peer group, Pakistan at 3.5 percent of GDP and Sri Lanka at approximately 1.9 percent of GDP maintain higher formal defense spending ratios.

This comparison is frequently cited by military planners and their academic advocates to argue that Bangladesh is systematically underinvesting in its security. The argument has merit when stated carefully: Bangladesh's security environment has become genuinely more demanding in recent years, with the Myanmar border crisis, the intensifying Bay of Bengal maritime competition, and the geopolitical pressures of the India-China rivalry all creating security requirements that the existing force structure and budget are poorly matched to address.

However, the comparison must also be made with appropriate caution. The relevant question is not simply what percentage of GDP is spent on defense, but whether the spending produces the security outcomes that Bangladesh needs and whether those outcomes could be produced more efficiently through different allocations or mechanisms. A defense budget that is 1.5 percent of GDP but allocated with strategic clarity, procurement integrity, and institutional efficiency might provide better security outcomes than a two percent allocation consumed by the structural inefficiencies and rent-seeking behaviors that characterize imperfect defense procurement institutions.

The argument for increasing Bangladesh's defense budget also must be situated within the broader fiscal landscape. The 2025-26 national budget of 7.9 trillion taka faced financing gaps that required both domestic borrowing and external financing. The annual development program, which funds the infrastructure and human capital investment on which Bangladesh's long-run economic growth depends, received an allocation that was itself stretched thin. Arguments for increasing defense spending must reckon honestly with what other public expenditures would need to be reduced or forgone, and with whether the democratic processes through which those trade-offs should be adjudicated are functioning adequately.

2.5 Defense Financing Mechanisms: Loans, Credits, and Off-Budget Commitments

The gap between Bangladesh's modest official defense budget and the ambitious scale of its proclaimed modernization program has been bridged primarily through government-to-government loan arrangements with arms-supplying states, primarily China, along with bilateral credit facilities with Turkey and other suppliers. Understanding the structure, terms, and macroeconomic implications of these financing arrangements is essential to a complete picture of Bangladesh's defense economy.

China has been the primary source of defense financing as well as defense equipment. Major procurement programs, including the Ming-class submarines acquired in 2016, the Type 056 corvettes, the surface-to-air missile systems, and the proposed J-10CE fighter acquisition, have been financed through concessional loan arrangements whose terms are not publicly disclosed. The aggregate value of these loan commitments is not precisely known from public sources, but analytical estimates based on the scale of procurement announced suggest total defense-related loan obligations to China of several billion USD.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The significance of this financing model for Bangladesh's strategic autonomy deserves careful examination. When a state finances major defense procurement through loans from the supplying state, it creates a compound dependency: not only is the recipient state dependent on the supplier for replacement parts, upgrades, and technical support for the equipment, but it also becomes a debtor to the same supplier, creating financial leverage that can be used to influence recipient behavior in ways that go beyond the straightforward arms-supplier relationship. This is not a unique vulnerability of Bangladesh's; it is characteristic of Chinese defense financing arrangements globally. But its implications for Bangladesh's proclaimed policy of strategic autonomy and non-alignment deserve honest acknowledgment in policy analysis.

Turkey has emerged as the second most important financing partner for Bangladesh's defense procurement. Turkish defense exports to Bangladesh, spanning Otokar armored vehicles, TRG multiple launch rocket systems, and potentially the Bayraktar drone series and SIPER air defense systems, have been partly financed through preferential credit arrangements that reflect the broader strategic partnership between Ankara and Dhaka that has deepened following the July 2024 Revolution. Turkey's Islamic Development Bank membership and its OIC leadership role have facilitated financial arrangements that carry political dimensions distinct from purely commercial arms financing.

The fiscal risk posed by accumulated off-budget defense loan obligations is an underappreciated dimension of Bangladesh's macroeconomic vulnerability. When these loan obligations begin to mature for repayment, they will create demands on the foreign exchange reserves and fiscal capacity that may coincide with other economic pressures in ways that are difficult to predict and manage. The lack of public transparency about the terms, schedule, and aggregate value of these obligations means that Bangladesh's national fiscal planning is being conducted without full information about one of its major contingent liabilities.

CHAPTER THREE: MILITARY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

3.1 The Genesis and Growth of Military Commercialism in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Armed Forces' commercial enterprise ecosystem did not emerge from a strategic plan designed to optimize some combination of military welfare, national development, and institutional autonomy. It emerged, as most institutional phenomena do, through a combination of historical inheritance, organizational adaptation to resource constraints, political opportunity-taking, and path-dependent evolution in which each institutional decision created precedents and interests that shaped subsequent decisions.

The historical foundation is the Sena Kalyan Sangstha, which traces its origins to the Post-War Services Reconstruction Fund established by the British government during the Second World War to provide for the rehabilitation of discharged soldiers. The fund's East Pakistan portion,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

reorganized as the Fauji Foundation during the Pakistani period and renamed Sena Kalyan Sangstha after independence, received its initial capital from wartime military savings and subsequent government contributions. The fundamental rationale was welfare provision for veterans and their families in a context where the state lacked the administrative capacity to deliver these services directly. A self-financing trust that could generate revenues to support veteran welfare was, in this context, a rational institutional design.

The evolution from this welfare-focused foundation to the multifaceted commercial conglomerate that Sena Kalyan Sangstha represents today was gradual but cumulative. Each successful commercial venture created both the institutional capacity and the appetites for further expansion. Each government that needed the military's political support found it strategically useful to accommodate or even encourage commercial expansion as a mechanism for generating military institutional loyalty without direct budget increases. Each period of military political dominance, particularly the Zia and Ershad eras, provided opportunities for commercial expansion that peacetime elected governments found politically difficult to reverse even when they wanted to.

By the time of the BBC documentary "Fouji Banijjo" in the early 2010s, which documented the Bangladesh Army's commercial interests across food, textile, jute, garment, electronics, real estate, automobile, shipbuilding, banking, power plants, roads, and infrastructure, the military's commercial footprint had grown to a scale that made it, as the documentary concluded, one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh. The Army Welfare Trust, established in 1998, had in some analyses grown to be a more dynamic commercial enterprise than the older Sena Kalyan Sangstha, operating with even less formal transparency and accountability. The Economist estimated Sena Kalyan Sangstha assets alone at over 700 million USD as of the early 2020s.

The organizational structure of this commercial ecosystem is complex and deliberately opaque. Sena Kalyan Sangstha operates through seven business divisions, eight supporting divisions, one real estate and construction division, and twenty-nine factories. Its subsidiary and associated companies include Sena Insurance, Sena LPG, Sena Cement, Sena Garments, Sena Travel, Sena Security and Logistics, Sena Petrochemicals, and multiple retail and manufacturing operations. The Army Welfare Trust adds another layer of commercial interests. The Air Force Welfare Trust and Navy Welfare Trust, though smaller, follow the same institutional model. The Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory and Bangladesh Diesel Plant, technically army-owned industrial enterprises, produce a range of civilian and military products. The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, while primarily military production facilities, have commercial dimensions. Khulna Shipyard, under Navy jurisdiction, conducts both government and commercial shipbuilding. Trust Bank, operated under military auspices, provides financial services to both military and civilian customers.

3.2 The Comparative Literature on Military Commercial Enterprises

The academic literature on military commercial enterprises in developing states has grown significantly since the early 2000s, when researchers began systematically comparing the phenomenon across different regional and institutional contexts. This comparative perspective provides essential analytical tools for evaluating Bangladesh's specific situation.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The most comprehensive theoretical framework is provided by the concept of "military business networks" developed by scholars like Marcus Mietzner in the Indonesian context, Ayesha Siddiqa in the Pakistani context, and Alfred Stepan in the Brazilian context. These scholars identified a common syndrome in which military commercial enterprises, whatever their original welfare justification, consistently evolve toward institutional autonomy from civilian oversight, generating resources that the military controls independently of the formal state budget and that can be used to sustain military political influence even when civilian governments attempt to assert control over the formal defense budget.

Ayesha Siddiqa's Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy (2007) remains the most cited analysis of this phenomenon and is directly relevant to Bangladesh given the Pakistani institutional heritage that Bangladesh's military inherited through the Fauji Foundation connection. Siddiqa documented what she called "milbus," military business, as a defining feature of Pakistani political economy: the military's commercial interests had grown to the point where they constituted a separate economy within the economy, one that was structurally resistant to civilian oversight, that competed with private sector enterprises on terms advantaged by its institutional position, and that created incentives for continued military political engagement that went far beyond any security function. Her analysis of the consequences for Pakistani democratic governance was devastating: the military's economic interests had made it effectively impossible for civilian governments to meaningfully reform civil-military relations because doing so would require confronting an institution whose economic power gave it leverage over almost every significant sector of Pakistani society.

The Indonesian case, documented by Mietzner and others, offers a partial positive counterexample. The Indonesian military's commercial enterprises, known collectively as the yayasan or foundation system, were similarly extensive in the Suharto era but were subjected to a reform process under the post-authoritarian democratic governments of the 2000s that, while imperfect and incomplete, did succeed in reducing the military's economic footprint and strengthening civilian oversight mechanisms. The reform process required the concurrence of the military leadership, which was persuaded that the commercial enterprises were a source of institutional reputational damage rather than genuine welfare benefit, and the determination of civilian political leaders who were willing to accept short-term political risks for longer-term governance improvements. The Indonesian reform experience is perhaps the closest available precedent for what a realistic reform of Bangladesh's military commercial enterprises might look like.

3.3 The Governance Problem: Why Military Commercial Enterprises Resist Accountability

The governance challenges posed by military commercial enterprises are not simply a function of bad intentions or corrupt individuals. They are structural features of the institutional design that make accountability systematically difficult even when all the participants are acting in good faith.

The first structural challenge is the legal ambiguity that surrounds military commercial enterprises in most jurisdictions, including Bangladesh. Are they government entities subject to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the full range of public sector accountability mechanisms including parliamentary oversight, public accounts committee scrutiny, and auditor general access? Or are they private trusts or corporations whose commercial operations are governed by corporate law with its more limited public accountability requirements? In Bangladesh, this question has never been fully resolved, and the resulting ambiguity enables the entities to claim the benefits of both legal statuses, the institutional protection of their governmental character when accountability is demanded, and the commercial privacy of their corporate character when transparency is requested.

The second structural challenge is the classification dynamic. Defense-related commercial activities are frequently protected from public disclosure through national security justifications that are difficult to challenge and that may or may not be genuinely applicable to specific operations. When Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory's production activities, its pricing arrangements, and its revenue flows are treated as defense-sensitive information, the accountability mechanisms that would apply to any comparable civilian manufacturing enterprise become unavailable.

The third structural challenge is the dual-role problem for military personnel in management positions. Senior military officers who serve as directors, board members, or executives of commercial enterprises face an inherent conflict between their institutional loyalty to the military establishment, their personal financial interests in the commercial success of the enterprise, and any obligation they might have to the broader public interest. In the absence of robust conflict of interest frameworks that are actively enforced, the dual-role problem systematically skews commercial enterprise governance toward institutional and personal interests at the expense of public interest.

The fourth structural challenge is the captured oversight problem. The parliamentary and governmental mechanisms that nominally provide oversight of military commercial enterprises, including the Ministry of Defense, the public accounts process, and parliamentary committees, are in practice substantially captured by the institutional interests they are meant to oversee. The Ministry of Defense's lack of genuine authority over the Armed Forces Division has already been noted in earlier parts of this textbook. The public accounts process is limited by the same information asymmetries that make defense oversight generally difficult. Parliamentary committee members often lack the technical expertise and institutional access needed to effectively scrutinize complex commercial operations.

3.4 The Competition Problem: Military Enterprises and the Private Sector

One of the most consequential and least publicly discussed dimensions of military commercial enterprises in Bangladesh is their competitive relationship with the private sector. When military enterprises operate in civilian markets, producing cement, food products, financial services, real estate, and consumer goods, they do so with a set of institutional advantages that no private competitor can replicate.

These advantages include access to land at below-market cost or without cost entirely; labor provided by military personnel at military rather than civilian wage rates; institutional access to procurement networks and government contracts that civilian competitors cannot match; implicit

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

government guarantee of institutional survival regardless of commercial performance; freedom from some of the regulatory requirements, labor law obligations, and tax compliance burdens that apply to civilian enterprises; and the brand and trust value associated with military affiliation in a society where the military retains significant social prestige.

Competition on these terms is not merely unfair in some abstract sense. It has concrete economic effects that harm private sector development. When military enterprises capture market share in cement, food processing, real estate, and banking on the basis of institutional advantages rather than superior efficiency or quality, they reduce the returns available to private investors in these sectors and thereby discourage the private investment that drives economic growth and employment generation. When military construction firms compete for infrastructure contracts on terms that include institutional leverage over the contracting process, they crowd out private construction capacity that could otherwise develop the management and technical capabilities needed for Bangladesh's continued infrastructure development.

The private sector competition problem is particularly acute in the context of Bangladesh's development ambitions. The country's remarkable economic achievement since independence has been driven primarily by private sector enterprise, most visibly in the garment sector but increasingly across a range of manufacturing, services, and agricultural value chain activities. The continued expansion of military commercial enterprises into civilian markets represents a structural constraint on this private sector dynamism that is inconsistent with Bangladesh's stated development model.

3.5 A Framework for Reform: Lessons from International Experience

The question of what can be done about military commercial enterprises is simultaneously a governance question, a political economy question, and a question of civil-military relations. It admits no simple solution and requires sustained political will over an extended period. But the comparative literature, and particularly the Indonesian and Chilean cases, provides at least the outlines of a reform framework that could be adapted to Bangladesh's specific institutional context.

The Chilean case is instructive because it involved a relatively successful transition from a situation of military commercial and political dominance to one of civilian democratic control without a breakdown of institutional order. The key mechanisms in the Chilean transition included the negotiated reduction of military commercial activities as part of a broader civil-military compact that preserved military institutional interests in other domains, the professionalization of military career incentives away from commercial management toward operational excellence, the strengthening of civilian oversight institutions including parliamentary defense committees, the creation of independent auditing mechanisms with genuine access to military enterprise accounts, and the gradual reassignment of military-managed assets to civilian public sector management or privatization.

For Bangladesh, a realistic reform agenda might include several elements. First, the legal status of military commercial enterprises should be definitively clarified, bringing them under either public sector accountability mechanisms with full parliamentary oversight and auditor general

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

access, or genuine corporate law with the full transparency and board independence requirements that serious corporate governance demands. The current ambiguity serves only institutional autonomy interests and should be ended through legislation.

Second, the scope of military commercial activities should be progressively narrowed toward those with a genuine nexus to defense industrial capability or veteran welfare, with activities in competitive civilian markets divested to private or public civilian entities on commercially reasonable terms over a defined time period. This narrowing should be a negotiated rather than imposed process, structured in ways that preserve genuine welfare benefits for veterans and their families through more direct and accountable delivery mechanisms.

Third, the proceeds from commercial enterprise divestiture should be directed toward a dedicated veteran welfare fund governed by an independent board with civilian representation and subject to full public financial transparency, ensuring that reform does not come at the cost of the legitimate welfare interests that justified the original enterprise model.

Fourth, the dual-role problem should be addressed through robust conflict of interest legislation that prohibits serving military officers from holding commercial management or directorial positions, while permitting retired officers to serve in such roles subject to cooling-off periods and disclosure requirements similar to those applied in many OECD countries to former senior officials.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

4.1 Defense Industrialization as Development Strategy: Theory and International Experience

The idea that defense industrial development can serve as a vehicle for broader economic development is one of the most appealing and most historically contested propositions in the political economy of security. The appeal is understandable: defense industries produce technologically sophisticated products, require substantial human capital development, generate civilian technological spillovers, and have strategic value that justifies public investment that might not otherwise be commercially viable. The contestation is equally understandable: the historical record of defense industrial programs as development vehicles in developing states is mixed at best and actively damaging at worst in many documented cases.

The theoretical case for defense industrial development rests on several related arguments. The first is the technological spillover argument, which holds that defense research and development generates civilian technological applications that advance the broader industrial and innovation capacity of an economy. The canonical historical examples are from advanced industrial states: GPS technology, the internet, jet engines, microwave ovens, and numerous other civilian technologies that trace their origins to military research programs. The spillover argument also

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

notes that defense industries create demand for sophisticated engineering talent, materials science expertise, and systems integration capabilities that can be applied across civilian industrial sectors.

The second argument is the infant industry argument, adapted from classic development economics. Some industries that are strategically important may not be commercially viable at their current stage of development, either because domestic markets are too small, existing foreign producers benefit from economies of scale and learning curve advantages, or the capital and technology required represent entry barriers that market mechanisms will not overcome. In these cases, a government-supported industrial program, including defense industry, can provide the protected environment in which domestic capabilities develop to the point where they become commercially and strategically self-sustaining.

The third argument is the import substitution argument. A country that imports all its major defense equipment is permanently dependent on foreign suppliers for capabilities that are strategically essential to national sovereignty. Building domestic production capacity for at least some defense equipment categories reduces this dependency, generates foreign exchange savings, and creates a domestic economic activity with multiplier effects in the wider economy.

Against these arguments, the critics of defense industrialization as development strategy have mounted equally serious objections. The empirical record of defense industrial programs in developing states includes far more failures than successes. Programs from India's Arjun main battle tank (which required decades of development and ultimately required supplementation with imported tanks to meet operational requirements) to Argentina's Pulqui II jet fighter (which was abandoned after enormous investment) to Indonesia's N-250 regional aircraft (which fell victim to the financial crisis before it could demonstrate commercial viability) illustrate the gap between the theoretical case for defense industrial development and the practical difficulties of implementation in environments characterized by limited engineering talent pools, weak innovation ecosystems, and inadequate institutional frameworks.

The most systematic comparative analysis, drawing on SIPRI data and development economics research, suggests that defense industrialization generates positive economic spillovers primarily in countries that already have relatively sophisticated civilian industrial bases and strong innovation institutions, specifically the conditions that most developing states lack when they initiate defense industrial programs. For states at Bangladesh's level of industrial development, the returns to investment in education, infrastructure, and civilian manufacturing are likely to significantly exceed the returns to defense industrial investment in terms of broad-based economic development outcomes.

4.2 Bangladesh's Defense Industrial Base: Current State and Structural Analysis

Bangladesh's defense industrial base as of 2026 consists of several distinct institutional elements that vary considerably in their capabilities, governance structures, and economic significance.

The most established element is the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, which produce small arms, ammunition, explosives, and related materials primarily for domestic armed forces use. The

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

BOF's most significant product is the BD-08 assault rifle, which represents indigenous weapons production though with technology transferred from foreign partners. The BOF's expansion plan for 2025-2035, which envisions progressively scaling up both the range and volume of production from small arms to guided munitions and more sophisticated systems, represents the most detailed and credible defense industrial development program that Bangladesh has publicly articulated.

The Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory is a second significant element, producing military vehicle components including spare parts for armored personnel carriers and tanks, along with civilian machinery and light vehicles such as the Arunima utility truck. The BMTF has been the most commercially active of the defense industrial entities and has demonstrated the capacity to develop and produce products for both military and civilian markets, though its competitive position in civilian markets raises the private sector competition concerns noted in Chapter Three.

Khulna Shipyard, under Bangladesh Navy jurisdiction, has successfully produced a series of Offshore Patrol Vessels and smaller craft for the navy and has attracted interest from the defense establishment as a potential platform for indigenous frigate and corvette construction. The shipyard's ambition to progress toward larger combatants represents perhaps the most technically demanding of Bangladesh's defense industrial aspirations, requiring significant upgrading of design, engineering, and production capabilities that will take years and substantial investment to achieve.

The newest element of the defense industrial base is the CETC drone manufacturing facility, established under the technology transfer arrangement with China's CETC corporation. The facility, planned for completion by December 2025, represents Bangladesh's most ambitious attempt at technology transfer in the defense domain and will, if successful, give Bangladesh indigenous production capacity for UAV systems that have both military applications and growing civilian applications in agriculture, infrastructure monitoring, and emergency response.

The Bangladesh Army's participation in the World Defence Show 2026 in Riyadh, where BOF, BMTF, BDPL, and Sena Kalyan Sangstha exhibited indigenous products, represented an important milestone in Bangladesh's defense industrial development: the first time Bangladesh presented its manufacturing capabilities to a genuinely international defense industry audience and explored the possibility of export markets for domestically produced equipment. The range of products on display, including assault rifles, ammunition, APC spare parts, military vehicle components, and soldier systems, was modest but real, representing the foundation on which a more ambitious defense industrial program could potentially be built.

4.3 The Defense Economic Zone: Design, Rationale, and Political Economy

The Defense Economic Zone initiative, announced by the interim government in 2025 and being developed under the framework of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority, represents the most ambitious attempt yet to systematically develop Bangladesh's defense industrial base as a component of national economic strategy. The initiative deserves detailed analysis because it

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

illustrates both the potential and the challenges of defense industrialization as development strategy in the specific Bangladesh context.

The DEZ concept draws on the model of the broader Special Economic Zones that have been central to Bangladesh's export-led industrialization strategy, providing dedicated industrial infrastructure, streamlined regulatory processes, fiscal incentives, and institutional support for investment in specified sectors. Applied to defense industry, the DEZ model proposes to attract foreign defense manufacturers to establish production facilities in Bangladesh through technology transfer arrangements, with Bangladesh committing to purchase a defined volume of production while also retaining the right to export regionally. The Bangladesh Investment Development Authority's executive chairman articulated the vision as creating a hub for military manufacturing through partnerships with foreign investors who bring advanced technology and Bangladesh provides the market commitment and competitive labor costs.

The economic logic of the DEZ model in the defense context has some appeal. Bangladesh's primary competitive advantage in manufacturing is its large, relatively low-cost labor force combined with improving but still modest levels of technical training. In labor-intensive defense manufacturing, such as the production of small arms, ammunition, basic vehicle components, and textile military equipment, this labor cost advantage is real and potentially meaningful. The DEZ model, by concentrating infrastructure and regulatory support, can reduce some of the transaction costs that otherwise deter foreign investment in Bangladesh's manufacturing sector.

However, the DEZ model faces several serious challenges in the defense sector that do not apply with equal force in civilian manufacturing. The first is the technology transfer problem. Defense manufacturers in advanced industrial states are subject to export control regimes that restrict the transfer of militarily significant technology to foreign production facilities. The United States International Traffic in Arms Regulations, the European Union's Common Position on Arms Exports, and equivalent regimes in other supplier states create legal obstacles to the kind of technology transfer that would make the DEZ genuinely valuable from an industrial development perspective. Technology transfers from China and Turkey, which are less constrained by these regimes, are therefore more feasible in the near term but may transfer less sophisticated technology.

The second challenge is the market size problem. Defense manufacturing requires production runs large enough to achieve economies of scale, but Bangladesh's domestic armed forces represent a relatively small market for most categories of defense equipment. The DEZ model's answer to this problem is the regional export market, but defense exports from a new entrant face both political and commercial obstacles: political obstacles because arms exports require diplomatic relationships and regulatory approvals in recipient markets, and commercial obstacles because established suppliers offer products with track records, servicing networks, and financing arrangements that new entrants cannot readily replicate.

The third challenge is the civilian-military dual-use complication. The most economically valuable applications of many defense manufacturing technologies are in civilian markets where commercial scale and competition are available, but the use of DEZ investment for civilian production may create legal and regulatory complications under the national security frameworks

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that govern defense industrial investment. Managing this dual-use dimension requires sophisticated regulatory design that Bangladesh's institutional capacity may not yet be able to deliver.

4.4 The Technology Transfer Framework: Legal, Strategic, and Economic Dimensions

Technology transfer in the defense domain is governed by a complex intersection of international arms control regimes, bilateral treaty obligations, domestic export control legislation in supplier states, and commercial arrangements between transferring and receiving entities. Understanding this legal and institutional framework is essential to evaluating the feasibility and strategic value of Bangladesh's technology transfer aspirations.

The most important international instruments governing defense technology transfer are the various multilateral export control arrangements, particularly the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. Wassenaar, of which thirty-nine states are participating members, requires participating states to notify each other of denials of export licenses for controlled technologies and creates a framework of consultations about individual export decisions. While Wassenaar is not formally binding in the sense of requiring specific export denials, it creates peer pressure that makes participating states reluctant to approve exports that other participants have denied.

China and Turkey, which are not Wassenaar members, are therefore able to offer technology transfer arrangements for certain controlled technologies that Western suppliers cannot legally provide. This is one of the structural factors that explains the tilt of Bangladesh's procurement and technology transfer toward these suppliers: it is not simply geopolitics or price sensitivity, but the legally available technology transfer options that shape the practical procurement landscape.

The CETC drone manufacturing arrangement is a good illustration of these dynamics. Chinese UAV technology of the type that CETC is transferring to Bangladesh is not subject to Western export controls because Western suppliers are not offering comparable technology transfer arrangements, partly due to export control constraints and partly due to commercial strategy decisions. The transfer is legally unencumbered from Bangladesh's perspective and represents genuine technology acquisition that Bangladesh could not readily obtain from alternative suppliers. The strategic considerations around the longer-term dependency implications and the technical limitations relative to more advanced Western UAV systems are real but must be weighed against the practical availability of alternatives.

The legal framework for technology transfer in Bangladesh's domestic law is less well developed than the international dimension. Bangladesh does not have a comprehensive defense technology transfer regime that defines the terms on which foreign technology can be received, the intellectual property arrangements that govern its use, the export restrictions that apply to products incorporating transferred technology, and the institutional arrangements for managing the technology and preventing its unauthorized dissemination. Developing such a regime is an essential element of building a serious defense industrial base and is a prerequisite for attracting

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the most valuable technology transfer partnerships with states and corporations that require confidence about Bangladesh's ability to protect the technologies they share.

4.5 The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories Expansion: A Case Study in Defense Industrial Planning

The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories' publicly articulated 2025-2035 expansion plan provides a useful case study in defense industrial planning methodology, illustrating both the sophistication that is developing within Bangladesh's defense industrial establishment and the challenges that any serious expansion program must address.

The plan is organized around a phased progression of manufacturing categories. Phase one focuses on expanding existing small arms and ammunition production, scaling up the BD-08 assault rifle production to meet full armed forces requirements and developing next-generation small arms variants. Phase two introduces guided munitions production, beginning with rocket motors and warheads for existing MLRS systems and progressing toward anti-tank guided missiles and short-range anti-aircraft systems. Phase three, the most ambitious, envisions production of medium-caliber naval guns, radar systems, and advanced electronics for military applications.

The technological progression implied by this plan is substantial, moving from relatively mature manufacturing technologies for small arms to sophisticated precision manufacturing and electronics integration for guided systems. The human capital requirements alone, in terms of the engineers, materials scientists, and systems integration specialists needed, represent a serious challenge for a country whose engineering talent pool, while growing, remains scarce and competed for by a wide range of civilian industrial applications.

The financing of the expansion plan is estimated at roughly ten to fifteen billion taka over the ten-year period, a figure that is significant but not implausible relative to Bangladesh's overall defense budget trajectory. The key question is not whether the funding can be found in principle but whether the institutional capacity to efficiently translate that funding into genuine capability exists in BOF's current organizational framework, and whether the procurement and program management discipline needed to execute a complex multi-year industrial investment program is available within the defense industrial establishment.

The plan's export ambition is perhaps its most significant and most uncertain element. The articulation of export potential as a justification for the scale of expansion proposed is reasonable in principle: domestic demand alone may not support the production volumes needed to achieve cost competitiveness, and export revenues would help finance the continued upgrading of production capability. But defense export markets are notoriously difficult to enter and are dominated by established suppliers with relationships, track records, and political leverage that new entrants like Bangladesh must work hard and long to overcome.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FIVE: BANGLADESH AS A PEACEKEEPING ECONOMY: THE STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF UN CONTRIBUTIONS

5.1 The Peacekeeping Dividend: Economic Dimensions of a Strategic Commitment

Bangladesh's position as the world's largest troop-contributing nation to United Nations peacekeeping operations represents one of the most distinctive features of its national security strategy and its broader economic profile. The scale of this commitment is genuinely remarkable: as of 2025, Bangladesh had deployed personnel in forty-five UN peacekeeping operations and missions across the globe since 1988, contributing more than 83,000 peacekeepers over that period. The country has paid a significant price in blood for this commitment, with 168 peacekeepers killed in action and 257 injured across various missions.

The economic dimensions of this commitment are both large and multi-layered. At the most direct level, the United Nations reimburses troop-contributing countries at standardized rates for the personnel they contribute to peacekeeping missions. These reimbursement rates, which include both personnel costs and equipment maintenance contributions, represent a significant source of revenue for the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Estimates of the annual financial flow to Bangladesh from UN peacekeeping reimbursements range from 80 to 100 million USD or more depending on the scale of deployment in any given year, though the precise figures are not publicly disclosed in detail.

These direct reimbursements are, however, only part of the economic picture. Individual peacekeeping personnel receive both their regular military salaries plus UN allowances that substantially exceed their domestic pay scales. For soldiers from backgrounds of modest economic means, a twelve-month peacekeeping deployment generates savings that can finance house construction, education for children, starting small businesses, and other investments that have multiplier effects in local economies across Bangladesh. Studies of Bangladesh's peacekeeping economy suggest that the remittance-like economic effects of peacekeeping allowances in the home communities of deployed soldiers contribute measurably to rural economic development and poverty reduction.

An important analytical essay published in 2025, examining the potential consequences of US cuts to UN peacekeeping financing, identified the peacekeeping economy as a meaningful lifeline for rural Bangladesh: the revenue stream from peacekeeping missions helps fund rural development, pays for education, and lifts families from poverty. The author argued that a sharp reduction in deployment opportunities could destabilize local economies already stressed by inflation and unemployment. This framing of peacekeeping as an economic rather than merely strategic phenomenon captures something important about the domestic political economy of Bangladesh's peacekeeping commitment.

5.2 The Strategic Logic of Peacekeeping: Beyond Economics

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

While the economic dimensions of peacekeeping are important and deserve more sustained analytical attention than they typically receive, the strategic logic of Bangladesh's peacekeeping commitment goes considerably beyond the financial calculus. Understanding the full strategic value of the peacekeeping role requires examining several interrelated dimensions.

The international prestige and diplomatic leverage dimension is perhaps the most obvious. Bangladesh's consistent status as the leading or near-leading troop contributor to UN peacekeeping gives it a recognized and valued role in the international community that is disproportionate to its size and economic weight. The commitment signals Bangladesh's orientation toward multilateral institutions and the rules-based international order, building diplomatic goodwill with the United Nations system, with the major powers that finance peacekeeping, and with the African and other states that host peacekeeping missions. This goodwill translates into concrete diplomatic benefits: access to international forums, receptive audiences for Bangladeshi foreign policy positions, and the soft power that comes from being seen as a responsible and capable contributor to global security.

The military capacity building dimension is less obvious but strategically important. Peacekeeping deployments expose Bangladeshi officers and non-commissioned officers to operational environments, multinational cooperation requirements, and mission complexities that domestic training cannot replicate. Officers who have served in complex multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations develop leadership, operational planning, logistical management, and intercultural communication skills that enhance the professional quality of the Bangladesh Armed Forces in ways that benefit the entire institution. Bangladesh's peacekeeping experience has been explicitly cited by military analysts as one of the factors that distinguishes the quality of Bangladeshi military professionalism from some of its regional counterparts.

The equipment and technical capability dimension is also relevant. Peacekeeping missions often require capabilities that force-contributing nations to develop or acquire: engineering capabilities for infrastructure construction and mine clearance, aviation capabilities for transport and reconnaissance, communications capabilities for wide-area coordination, and medical capabilities for casualty care. Bangladesh's investment in these enabling capabilities, motivated partly by peacekeeping requirements, has built a military service support infrastructure that has genuine value for domestic operations as well.

The gender inclusion dimension has become increasingly important in recent years. Bangladesh's record on female peacekeeping participation has been a source of genuine international recognition, with the deployment of the first all-Muslim, all-female peacekeeping unit to Haiti in 2015 drawing particular global attention. As of 2025, over 1,700 Bangladeshi women have served in UN peacekeeping missions, with 505 currently deployed. At the 2025 Berlin UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, Bangladesh pledged to deploy fifteen percent female peacekeepers in police units, to implement AI-integrated surveillance systems, and to install renewable energy capacity in existing missions, all of which signal continued commitment to the cutting edge of peacekeeping innovation.

5.3 The Sustainability Challenge: Peacekeeping Under Fiscal Pressure

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The sustainability of Bangladesh's peacekeeping commitment faces several serious challenges that were brought into sharp relief by developments in 2025 and 2026. The most significant of these is the threat of reduced UN peacekeeping financing, driven primarily by the Trump administration's renewed pressure on the United States' assessed contribution to the UN peacekeeping budget.

The United States is the largest single contributor to UN peacekeeping financing, accounting for approximately twenty-eight percent of assessed contributions. When the Trump administration in early 2025 floated proposals for dramatically reducing this contribution, potentially through a cap at fifty percent of any individual mission's costs or a broader withdrawal from assessed contributions in favor of voluntary contributions, the implications for the entire peacekeeping system were alarming. For Bangladesh specifically, the implications were potentially devastating: a substantial reduction in UN peacekeeping financing would reduce the scale and number of missions in which Bangladesh could deploy, cutting both the economic revenues and the strategic benefits of the peacekeeping commitment.

In the event, the reimbursement system has continued to function, though with growing UN liquidity pressures that have created payment delays and cash flow difficulties for troop-contributing countries. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, attending the 2025 Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial, explicitly raised the issue of resource constraints and called for urgent international action. Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations emphasized in November 2025 the importance of fairness and equitable burden-sharing across all participating countries, and expressed concern about the withdrawal of a full female police unit contingent as an inconsistency with the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The strategic implication of this fiscal pressure for Bangladesh is that the peacekeeping dividend, while real, cannot be treated as a permanent and stable element of the defense and foreign policy architecture. A serious risk management dimension of Bangladesh's defense policy needs to account for scenarios in which peacekeeping revenues are reduced, either through reduced UN financing or through changing mission requirements, and develop the domestic fiscal capacity and alternative income sources for the armed forces that would allow the institution to function effectively even with reduced peacekeeping revenue flows.

5.4 Peacekeeping, Civil-Military Relations, and Democratic Accountability

The peacekeeping commitment has a frequently overlooked dimension that is directly relevant to the civil-military relations questions that run through this entire textbook. The institutional experience of operating in complex, multi-stakeholder, rule-of-law-constrained peacekeeping environments has exposed senior Bangladeshi military officers to organizational cultures and operational norms that differ substantially from those that have historically characterized Bangladesh's own civil-military relations.

UN peacekeeping operations, whatever their operational limitations, operate under frameworks of civilian political oversight, accountability to an international chain of command, transparency about rules of engagement, and protection of civilian populations that embody the norms of democratic civil-military relations in operational form. Bangladeshi officers who have

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

commanded peacekeeping contingents have had to operate within these frameworks, developing institutional competencies and, in at least some cases, normative orientations consistent with democratic civil-military relations principles.

The extent to which this peacekeeping socialization translates into changed institutional behavior when officers return to the domestic context is uncertain and debated in the academic literature on military socialization. The study of professionalism in the Bangladesh Armed Forces suggests that the peacekeeping experience has contributed to a more outward-looking and professionally oriented military culture at the officer corps level, even as structural incentives for institutional autonomy and political influence have remained strong. The reform of civil-military relations in Bangladesh will require institutional and legal changes that create new incentive structures, but the peacekeeping experience provides a resource of professional socialization that reformers can build on.

5.5 The Future of Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Role in a Changing Global Order

The global peacekeeping environment is changing in ways that create both challenges and opportunities for Bangladesh's peacekeeping strategy. The changing nature of conflicts, the increasing involvement of great power competition in peacekeeping mission politics, the evolving technological requirements of peacekeeping operations, and the fiscal pressures on the UN system all require Bangladesh to think strategically about how it manages its peacekeeping commitment in the decade ahead.

The technology dimension is particularly important. Modern peacekeeping operations increasingly require capabilities in surveillance and reconnaissance, including drone operations, cyber and information management, AI-assisted threat analysis, and sophisticated communications infrastructure. Bangladesh's pledge at the 2025 Berlin Ministerial to deploy AI-integrated camp surveillance systems and renewable energy infrastructure signals awareness of these evolving requirements. But building the actual technological capabilities to deliver these pledges, rather than simply making diplomatic announcements, requires sustained investment in military technology capacity that connects the peacekeeping and modernization agendas in productive ways.

The great power competition dimension is increasingly relevant to peacekeeping mission politics. The deteriorating relationship between major powers, particularly between the United States and China, has increasingly affected the Security Council dynamics through which peacekeeping mandates are established and renewed. Bangladesh, as a country that navigates relationships with both China and the United States as a matter of strategic imperative, must manage its peacekeeping engagement with awareness of these great power dynamics. In specific mission contexts, where different major powers have competing preferences about peacekeeping scope, mandate, and conduct, Bangladesh's senior peacekeeping commanders will face increasingly complex political pressures that require sophisticated institutional preparation.

The African dimension of Bangladesh's peacekeeping engagement deserves special attention as a component of broader foreign policy strategy. The majority of Bangladesh's peacekeeping deployments are in African missions, and the relationships built through decades of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

peacekeeping presence in African countries constitute a diplomatic asset that is inadequately leveraged in Bangladesh's broader foreign policy. As Africa's economic importance grows and as Bangladesh seeks both export markets for its products and sources of investment and raw materials for its economy, the goodwill generated by consistent and professional peacekeeping contributions represents a foundation on which deeper economic and diplomatic engagement can be built.

CHAPTER SIX: THE FISCAL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE 2026-2040 DEFENSE MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

6.1 The Scale of the Requirement and the Financing Challenge

The ambition of Bangladesh's defense modernization program for the 2026-2040 period, as articulated in public statements, analytical documents from bdmilitary.com, and the BNP's defense policy proposals, implies a total investment requirement that is staggering relative to Bangladesh's current defense budget and economic capacity. Preliminary estimates for a comprehensive program covering all three services and the defense industrial base suggest total expenditures in the range of 50 to 75 billion USD over fifteen years, of which perhaps 15 to 20 billion would be required in the first five years to complete the most urgent capability gaps identified in Forces Goal 2030.

To put this in context: Bangladesh's current official defense budget of approximately 3.34 billion USD per year implies a fifteen-year cumulative total of only 50 billion USD, assuming no real increase. Achieving the aspirational modernization program would require either substantial real increases in the defense budget, continued and expanded off-budget financing through government-to-government loans and bilateral credit arrangements, or significant generation of resources through defense industrial development and peacekeeping revenues. In practice, it will require all three, along with reforms to procurement processes that extract greater value from every taka spent.

The financing challenge is not simply a technical fiscal problem. It is a political economy problem that involves the distribution of costs and benefits across the population, across generations, and across different institutional actors with different interests in the outcome. Getting the fiscal architecture right requires a political as well as a technical solution, and that political solution requires the kind of democratic deliberation about defense priorities that Bangladesh's governance structures have historically been inadequate to facilitate.

6.2 Scenario Analysis: Three Fiscal Frameworks for 2026-2040

Developing a realistic fiscal framework for the 2026-2040 defense modernization program requires scenario analysis that considers different assumptions about Bangladesh's economic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

growth, fiscal capacity, political stability, and strategic environment. Three scenarios can be constructed that bracket the realistic range of outcomes.

The first, a constrained modernization scenario, assumes that Bangladesh's economy continues to grow at approximately six to seven percent annually in real terms, that the defense budget increases modestly in real terms toward approximately 1.5 to 1.8 percent of GDP over the period, and that off-budget financing continues to be available for major platform acquisitions at current terms and volumes. Under this scenario, Bangladesh can afford a meaningful but incomplete modernization: completing the naval three-dimensional force concept, acquiring a significantly improved air defense capability and a new generation fighter aircraft for the air force, maintaining and partially upgrading the army's armored and artillery capabilities, and building out the foundation of the defense industrial base through the BOF expansion and DEZ initiatives. This scenario produces a materially more capable military than Bangladesh fields today, but one that still faces significant capability gaps relative to the most demanding contingencies in its threat environment.

The second scenario is an accelerated modernization scenario, assuming higher economic growth of seven to eight percent annually, a defense budget increasing to 2.0 to 2.5 percent of GDP over the period, significantly increased off-budget financing capacity negotiated with China, Turkey, and potentially new supplier partners including the United States, South Korea, and Japan, and the successful development of defense industrial revenues that partially offset public budget requirements. Under this scenario, Bangladesh achieves the full ambition of Forces Goal 2030 and its successor program, including a multi-submarine naval force with genuine coastal deterrence capability, a three-tier air force with advanced multi-role aircraft capable of meaningful area denial, a fully mechanized and missile-capable army, and an indigenous defense industrial base producing a meaningful share of ammunition, basic platforms, and drone systems. This scenario requires both favorable economic conditions and sustained political commitment to defense investment priorities across at least two full government cycles, assumptions that carry significant uncertainty.

The third is a fiscally stressed scenario, assuming that Bangladesh faces a period of slower economic growth driven by external shocks, continued domestic political instability, reduction in peacekeeping revenues, rising debt service costs from accumulated off-budget defense financing, or some combination of these pressures. Under this scenario, the defense budget faces real pressure and the modernization program is subject to significant delay, cancellation, and capability compromise. The fiscal stress scenario is not a low-probability extreme case: given the volatility of Bangladesh's economic and political environment demonstrated over the past decade, it represents a genuine and important risk that any responsible defense planning process must explicitly address.

6.3 The Procurement Integrity Imperative

Any discussion of the fiscal framework for Bangladesh's defense modernization is incomplete without direct engagement with the procurement integrity problem. Defense procurement in Bangladesh has a documented history of corruption, cost inflation, and capability-reducing

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

quality compromises that represent both a direct economic cost and a strategic capability cost of the first order.

The most analytically documented dimension of this problem is the interaction between the secrecy of defense procurement and the absence of robust institutional checks on procurement decisions. When major procurement decisions are made without parliamentary oversight, without independent technical evaluation, without competitive tendering, and without post-delivery performance verification that is accessible to public review, the conditions for rent-seeking and corruption are structurally embedded in the system. Transparency International Bangladesh's analyses, academic studies of defense procurement in South Asian states, and journalistic investigations have all identified the defense sector as among the most vulnerable to corruption among all government spending categories in Bangladesh.

The institutional reforms needed to address this vulnerability are not exotic or unprecedented: they are the standard elements of good procurement governance that are found in functioning democratic states around the world. Independent technical evaluation of competing procurement options by qualified civilian engineers and analysts rather than solely by the services that will operate the equipment would reduce the bias toward service preferences that are not always aligned with best value for money. Parliamentary committee review of major procurement decisions, with access to sufficient technical information to make meaningful assessments, would introduce democratic accountability into decisions that currently escape it entirely. Post-delivery performance audits that are reported to Parliament and available for public review would create accountability for whether equipment actually performs as promised, creating incentives for both procurement officials and suppliers to maintain quality standards.

The political will to implement these reforms is the critical variable. Defense procurement reform threatens institutional interests that are well-positioned to resist it: the services, which prefer decisions that maximize their operational autonomy; the contractors, who prefer the less competitive and more relationship-dependent procurement environment; and the senior officials whose career trajectories are intertwined with specific procurement relationships. Overcoming this resistance requires political leadership at the highest level that is willing to accept short-term friction with military and commercial interests for the sake of longer-term fiscal efficiency and strategic coherence.

6.4 The Macroeconomic Implications of Defense Spending Trajectories

The macroeconomic implications of different defense spending trajectories for Bangladesh's broader economy require careful analysis that is often missing from defense policy debates, which tend to focus on security requirements without adequately modeling the economic consequences of meeting those requirements.

The most straightforward macroeconomic implication of significant real increases in defense spending is the crowding out effect. A larger defense budget drawing on domestic resources, whether through higher taxes, reduced civilian spending, or increased government borrowing, reduces the resources available for private investment and civilian public spending. The empirical magnitude of this crowding out effect in Bangladesh's specific institutional context is

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

uncertain but likely significant, given that Bangladesh's financial markets are relatively thin and its fiscal space is genuinely constrained.

The alternative of financing defense increases primarily through foreign borrowing, the mechanism through which Bangladesh's modernization program has largely been financed through off-budget loan arrangements, has different but equally significant macroeconomic implications. Foreign currency debt service requirements create balance of payments obligations that constrain monetary policy flexibility and create vulnerability to exchange rate movements. If Bangladesh's external account deteriorates, as it has periodically during periods of export slowdown or remittance volatility, the foreign currency costs of defense loan service become more burdensome in domestic currency terms and create pressure on the reserve position that can constrain other economic policy choices.

The inflationary dimension is also relevant. Bangladesh experienced significant inflationary pressure in 2024 and 2025, with consumer price inflation running well above the Bangladesh Bank's target. Large increases in government spending, including defense spending, can contribute to inflationary pressure if they are not offset by equivalent reductions in other spending or increases in tax revenues. The IMF program that Bangladesh entered in this period explicitly targeted fiscal discipline as an inflation management mechanism, creating tension with ambitions for large defense budget increases.

The growth impact of defense spending depends critically on its composition and efficiency. Capital investment in defense infrastructure and equipment that generates long-run capability may have growth implications different from those of purely operational spending on salaries and consumables. Defense industrial development that builds human capital and generates civilian technology spillovers may produce positive growth effects that pure equipment import does not. But achieving these positive compositions requires exactly the procurement discipline and industrial strategy coherence that Bangladesh's current institutional framework does not reliably deliver.

6.5 A Legislative Framework for Defense Finance: Toward Fiscal Accountability

The institutional framework governing Bangladesh's defense finance is inadequate by almost any measure of democratic governance. The absence of meaningful parliamentary oversight of defense budgets, the opacity of off-budget financing mechanisms, the lack of independent audit access to defense enterprise accounts, and the classification of major procurement decisions all represent governance failures that produce both fiscal inefficiency and democratic accountability deficits.

Developing a legislative framework for defense finance that addresses these failures requires action on several fronts simultaneously. The legal foundation should be a Defense Finance Act or equivalent legislation that establishes the legal framework for all defense financial transactions, including both the formal defense budget and off-budget financing arrangements. This legislation should require disclosure to Parliament of all government-to-government loan agreements for defense procurement, including the principal amount, interest rate, repayment schedule, and strategic conditions attached to the agreement, within a defined period of signing.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

It should require annual reporting to the Public Accounts Committee on all defense enterprise revenues and expenditures, with independent auditor access. And it should establish the legal basis for an independent defense procurement review authority whose decisions are binding and whose procedures are publicly known.

The parliamentary dimension of defense finance reform requires strengthening the institutional capacity of parliamentary defense and budget committees to exercise meaningful oversight. This requires that committee members receive adequate security clearances to access defense-sensitive information, that professional staff with defense and financial analysis expertise are available to support committee work, that committees have the legal authority to compel testimony and document production from defense officials, and that their reports are acted upon through a defined government response mechanism rather than simply filed and ignored.

The transparency dimension requires the establishment of a defense finance disclosure framework that makes as much defense financial information as possible publicly available while genuinely protecting information whose disclosure would create security risks. The balance between transparency and security is not fixed and requires continuous calibration, but the current balance in Bangladesh is dramatically skewed toward opacity in ways that serve institutional interests rather than security requirements. International experience from countries including Sweden, Australia, and Canada demonstrates that very high levels of defense financial transparency are compatible with maintaining genuine national security.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY, CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SECURITY GOVERNANCE

7.1 The Theory of Democratic Civil-Military Relations: From Huntington to Feaver

The academic literature on civil-military relations provides the theoretical framework for understanding the governance challenges that are a central concern of this Part and indeed of the entire textbook. The foundational text in the field remains Samuel Huntington's The Soldier and the State (1957), which articulated the concept of objective civilian control: the maximization of military professionalism through the creation of a politically neutral military establishment that confines itself to military matters and accepts civilian direction in all questions of political significance.

Huntington's model has been criticized on multiple grounds over the sixty years since its publication. The most fundamental criticism is empirical: virtually no military establishment in practice conforms to the objectively apolitical model that Huntington prescribes. Militaries have institutional interests that they advocate for within the political system; they develop relationships with political actors and economic constituencies that create incentives for political

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

engagement; and in fragile democratic states they retain the capacity for direct political intervention that no institutional culture can fully neutralize.

The alternative theoretical frameworks that have developed in response to Huntington's limitations have been more sociologically sophisticated. Eliot Cohen's concept of unequal dialogue in Supreme Command (2002) argued that effective civil-military relations in democracies require an active and engaged civilian leadership that is willing to challenge military professional judgment on both political and operational questions, rather than the deferential relationship to military expertise that Huntington's model implies. Cohen's comparative analysis of Lincoln, Clemenceau, Churchill, and Ben-Gurion as wartime leaders illustrated that civilian political wisdom often sees dimensions of military problems that purely professional military judgment misses.

Peter Feaver's principal-agent theory, developed most fully in Armed Servants (2003), applies economic modeling to civil-military relations, treating the military as an agent that acts on behalf of civilian principals but that has its own institutional preferences and information advantages that create agency problems. Feaver's framework identifies the monitoring and incentive structures that determine whether agency problems are severe or manageable, and argues that the key variable is whether civilians invest in the oversight mechanisms needed to maintain effective control. Applied to Bangladesh, Feaver's framework diagnoses the civil-military relations problem with precision: the weakness of Bangladesh's civilian oversight mechanisms, from the subordinate role of the Ministry of Defense relative to the Armed Forces Division through the inadequate parliamentary committee structures, creates agency problems that allow military institutional interests to diverge substantially from civilian democratic preferences without effective check.

Rebecca Schiff's concordance theory offers a different perspective, arguing that the key variable in civil-military relations is not the formal institutional structure of oversight but the degree of agreement between the military, political elite, and citizenry on the appropriate social role of the military. Where this agreement exists, civil-military relations are stable regardless of the specific institutional arrangement; where it is absent, formal institutional controls are unlikely to succeed. Schiff's framework raises important questions for Bangladesh about the degree to which there is a genuine societal consensus about what role the military should play in political and economic life, and whether the July 2024 Revolution represented a shift in this consensus that creates new political space for civil-military relations reform.

7.2 The Bangladesh Civil-Military Relations Problem: Historical Context and Current Configuration

Bangladesh's civil-military relations have been shaped by a historical experience that differs fundamentally from the Western liberal democratic context in which most civil-military relations theory was developed. The Bangladesh Armed Forces were born in the liberation war of 1971, in which military and political roles were inherently fused in the guerrilla resistance against the Pakistani army. From the beginning, the Bangladesh military developed a political self-consciousness and a sense of national responsibility that gave it a basis for claiming political legitimacy that goes beyond its purely military professional role.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The sequence of military interventions in Bangladeshi politics, from the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975 through the Ziaur Rahman and Ershad eras, established a pattern in which the military was not merely a security instrument but a political actor with its own vision of national governance. Even during the periods of elected civilian government, the military's institutional autonomy, commercial interests, and political influence created a parallel power structure that constrained what elected governments could do and shaped the political environment in which democratic processes operated.

The Awami League governments of 2009 to 2024 maintained a complex and often described as mutually enabling relationship with the military leadership. The rapid expansion of Forces Goal 2030 served both the military's modernization ambitions and the government's desire to build a loyal security partner. The military's commercial interests were accommodated and in some dimensions expanded. The formal institutions of civilian oversight, the Ministry of Defense, parliamentary committees, and public audit mechanisms, remained weak throughout this period, though the Hasina government's dominance of the political system meant that civilian political control in the informal sense, through the personal relationship between the Prime Minister and the military leadership, was probably stronger than at any time since 1991.

The July 2024 Revolution and the establishment of the Yunus-led interim government reconfigured civil-military relations in ways that are still evolving. The military's decision to facilitate rather than suppress the uprising, including the effective withdrawal of security coverage for the Hasina government in its final hours, represented a political judgment by the military leadership that institutional interests were better served by accommodation with the revolutionary movement than by defense of the existing government. This decision preserved the military's institutional position and arguably enhanced its political leverage in the immediate post-transition period, since the new government's stability was dependent on military acquiescence in a way that a consolidated elected government's would not be.

Reports of tension between the interim government's chief adviser and the army chief in 2025 suggest that this relationship, always complex, continued to involve points of friction about the boundaries of military and civilian authority. The institutional framework has not fundamentally changed: the Armed Forces Division still reports directly to the Chief Adviser's office rather than through the Ministry of Defense, major procurement decisions remain largely outside parliamentary scrutiny, and the military's commercial enterprises continue to operate with limited accountability. What has changed is the political context: the July Revolution created new public expectations about accountability, transparency, and the relationship between state institutions and popular sovereignty that create at least some basis for reform momentum.

7.3 Legislative Architecture for Democratic Defense Governance

The transformation of Bangladesh's civil-military relations from the current pattern, characterized by military institutional autonomy, limited civilian oversight, and commercial interests that create structural incentives for political engagement, toward a genuinely democratic model requires systematic legislative reform. The existing legislative framework governing the armed forces is fragmentary, outdated, and inadequate for the governance demands of a modern democratic state.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The foundational legislation governing Bangladesh's armed forces consists primarily of the Army Act of 1952 (as modified after independence), equivalent acts for the Navy and Air Force, and various regulations and instructions issued under these statutory frameworks. These instruments were designed for a different political era and a different conception of the relationship between the military and the democratic state. They provide no meaningful mechanisms for parliamentary oversight of military operations, procurement, or enterprise activities. They do not articulate the principles of civil-military relations that should govern the relationship between elected government and the armed forces. And they provide no framework for the public accountability of military commercial enterprises.

A comprehensive reform of Bangladesh's defense legislation would include several interconnected elements. A National Defense Act or Armed Forces Act would establish the fundamental constitutional relationship between the democratic state and the armed forces, articulating the principle of civilian supremacy, defining the chain of command in terms that clearly subordinate military authority to elected civilian government, establishing the powers and responsibilities of the Ministry of Defense as the primary civilian oversight institution, and creating the legal framework for parliamentary committee oversight of defense matters.

A Defense Procurement Act would establish the legal framework for major defense procurement decisions, requiring competitive tendering above defined threshold values, independent technical evaluation by qualified civilian experts, parliamentary committee notification for contracts above a further threshold, and post-delivery performance audit with reporting requirements. It would prohibit procurement decisions that create vendor lock-in without explicit parliamentary approval and would establish penalties for procurement officials who deviate from prescribed procedures.

A Military Enterprise Transparency Act would bring the commercial activities of military-affiliated enterprises within a defined legal framework, requiring annual financial reporting to the Auditor General with public availability, independent external audit of all enterprises with revenues above a defined threshold, conflict of interest disclosure requirements for military officers in commercial management roles, and prohibition on enterprises competing in civilian markets without explicit parliamentary authorization.

A Veterans Welfare Act would separate the welfare function of military enterprises from their commercial activities, creating direct entitlement-based welfare provision for veterans and their families funded through a dedicated Veterans Welfare Fund that is publicly accountable, removing the institutional justification for commercial enterprise expansion based on welfare financing needs.

7.4 The Parliamentary Defense Committee: Architecture and Institutional Requirements

The parliamentary defense committee is the primary institutional mechanism through which democratic legislatures exercise oversight of military establishments in functioning democracies. The effectiveness of such committees varies enormously across different parliamentary systems,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and the variables that determine effectiveness are well understood from comparative institutional analysis.

The most important determinant of defense committee effectiveness is the committee's access to information. A committee that can compel the production of documents, that receives regular and detailed briefings from military and civilian defense officials, that has access to classified information relevant to its oversight functions, and that can commission independent analysis from expert advisers is capable of meaningful oversight. A committee that receives only what the defense establishment chooses to share, that lacks cleared staff with analytical capability, and that has no access to classified information is incapable of meaningful oversight regardless of its formal mandate.

Bangladesh's current parliamentary defense committee has access to very limited information about defense operations, procurement decisions, and military enterprise activities. The classification of major procurement decisions, the weak legal basis for compelled disclosure, and the inadequate professional staffing of parliamentary committees are the primary constraints on meaningful oversight. Addressing these constraints requires both legislative reform and institutional investment: legislation to establish clear access rights and compelled disclosure powers, and funding to build the professional staff capacity that enables committees to use those rights effectively.

The composition of the defense committee is also relevant to its effectiveness. In the Westminster parliamentary tradition from which Bangladesh's system derives, committees typically include members from both government and opposition parties, with the chair sometimes assigned to an opposition member to signal genuine rather than merely formal oversight. A defense committee that is dominated by government party members who are subject to party discipline that discourages criticism of government policy is structurally compromised in its oversight function. The optimal composition includes members with genuine interest and background in defense, security, and foreign policy matters, along with representatives of diverse political perspectives.

The committee's relationship to the broader parliamentary process is also important. Effective defense oversight requires that committee reports are debated on the floor of Parliament, that the government is required to respond formally to committee recommendations within a defined period, and that committee findings can be connected to budget decisions through the appropriations process. Currently, the connection between defense committee activity and actual budget outcomes is weak, meaning that parliamentary scrutiny of defense policy has limited practical consequences for resource allocation or operational decisions.

7.5 Jurisprudential Dimensions: Defense, Rights, and Constitutional Accountability

The jurisprudential dimensions of democratic defense governance concern the relationship between the security powers of the state, the fundamental rights of citizens, and the constitutional architecture that structures both. This relationship has become increasingly complex as the scope of security-relevant state action has expanded beyond traditional military operations to include

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

surveillance, detention, economic sanctions, information operations, and other activities that interact with civil liberties in ways that traditional constitutional frameworks inadequately address.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972 and subsequently amended on multiple occasions, establishes a framework for state power that is relevant to defense governance in several respects. Article 11 declares democracy and human rights as fundamental state principles. Article 20 establishes the obligation to work as both a right and a duty, implicitly framing defense as a civic responsibility. The fundamental rights provisions in Part III of the Constitution, including protections of freedom of thought, expression, movement, and association, potentially apply to the activities of military institutions in ways that have not been fully worked out in Bangladeshi constitutional jurisprudence.

The judicial oversight of military operations and military justice is a particularly underdeveloped area of Bangladeshi constitutional law. The military justice system, governed by the Army Act and equivalent instruments, operates largely outside the supervision of the civilian judiciary. Courts martial and military tribunals function according to procedures that differ from civil judicial norms in ways that raise due process concerns. The extent to which the Bangladesh Supreme Court's jurisdiction extends to review of military justice decisions has been contested and the settled jurisprudence is limited.

The use of the Armed Forces for internal security operations, which has been a recurrent feature of Bangladeshi political life from the BDR mutiny response in 2009 through various Election Commission support deployments and emergency security operations, raises constitutional questions about the appropriate scope of military involvement in civilian law enforcement that have not been adequately addressed through either legislation or judicial decisions. The Emergency Powers Ordinance framework through which military internal security deployments are typically authorized provides legal cover but does not address the deeper constitutional questions about the conditions under which such deployments are appropriate, the oversight mechanisms that should apply, and the accountability for actions taken during such deployments.

The right to information legislation and its application to defense matters illustrates the tension between transparency norms and security considerations in constitutional law. Bangladesh's Right to Information Act of 2009 establishes a presumption of transparency in government information but contains broad exemptions for national security information whose scope and application are not adequately defined. The result is a legal framework in which the security exemption can be invoked to justify withholding almost any defense-related information from public access, effectively nullifying the transparency presumption in the defense domain. More carefully drawn legislative definitions of what truly requires security protection, versus what is merely institutionally inconvenient to disclose, would enable much more robust public accountability without compromising genuine security interests.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BANGLADESHI DEFENSE: SYNTHESIS AND FRAMEWORK

8.1 The Developmental Security State: A Conceptual Framework

The analysis developed across this Part suggests the need for a conceptual framework that integrates the security, economic, and governance dimensions of Bangladesh's defense challenge in a way that captures their interconnections rather than treating them separately. The concept of the developmental security state offers one such framework.

The developmental security state, adapting the developmental state concept from the East Asian economic development literature through Chalmers Johnson's analysis of Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry and subsequent comparative studies of South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, describes a state that deploys its security institutions as active agents of national development strategy rather than treating them as purely protective functions. In the developmental security state, the military's role in national life extends beyond territorial defense to include active contributions to infrastructure development, technology acquisition, human capital formation, and industrial capability building. The military is not merely a consumer of national resources but a producer of national capacity.

This model has clear relevance to Bangladesh's existing practice, in which the armed forces play roles in infrastructure construction, disaster response, anti-corruption operations, economic enterprise, and now defense industrial development that go far beyond any narrowly military function. The question is not whether Bangladesh should be a developmental security state but whether its current form of developmental security engagement serves the broad national development interest or primarily serves military institutional interests that are not fully aligned with broader public welfare.

The normatively good version of the developmental security state is one in which the military's institutional resources, including its discipline, organizational capacity, technical training capability, and access to international networks, are deployed in ways that generate genuine public goods: infrastructure that reduces transportation costs and connects markets, technical training that improves the human capital base of the civilian workforce, emergency response capacity that protects the most vulnerable from the effects of natural disasters, and industrial development that builds capabilities that the civilian economy can build on. The normatively problematic version is one in which military institutional engagement in economic life primarily serves to build institutional autonomy, provide income for senior officers, and create the commercial and political leverage through which the military exercises influence over the civilian political sphere in ways inconsistent with democratic governance.

The distinction between these two versions of the developmental security state is not always obvious in practice, and the same institutional arrangements can contain elements of both. The challenge for Bangladesh's reform agenda is to preserve and strengthen the genuine public goods

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

contributions of the military's developmental role while progressively reforming the accountability deficits and private interest distortions that characterize its current form.

8.2 The Political Economy of Defense Reform: Who Wins and Who Loses

Any serious analysis of defense reform in Bangladesh must grapple directly with the political economy question: which actors benefit from the current arrangement, which would benefit from reform, and what coalitions might mobilize to support or resist change? Without this political economy analysis, reform proposals remain academic exercises that fail to engage with the institutional realities that determine whether policy change is actually possible.

The beneficiaries of the current arrangement are identifiable and their interests in maintaining it are clear. Military senior officers benefit from the commercial management roles, post-retirement sinecures, and institutional resource flows that the military enterprise system creates. Defense contractors, both domestic and foreign, benefit from procurement processes that are relationship-dependent rather than competitive, since incumbent suppliers with existing relationships are advantaged. Political actors who depend on the military's institutional support for political stability benefit from an arrangement that gives them leverage over that support through accommodation of military institutional interests. Communities that host military installations or benefit from military commercial activities benefit from the economic activity that military enterprises generate.

The reformers' coalition is less obvious and currently less organized. Domestic private sector enterprises that compete with military commercial entities have clear interests in leveling the competitive playing field but have historically been reluctant to challenge the military publicly given the political risks. Civil society organizations focused on transparency and accountability have consistently advocated for defense sector reform but lack the political leverage to force it. International partners, including the IMF, World Bank, and bilateral development partners that condition their engagement on governance improvements, have potential leverage that they have not systematically applied to the defense governance domain. Academic and policy communities that have documented the governance failures of the current system have contributed to the intellectual case for reform without yet generating effective political momentum.

The political conditions created by the July 2024 Revolution and the subsequent transition process represent the most significant opportunity for defense governance reform that Bangladesh has seen since the transition to democracy in 1990-91. The revolutionary movement's fundamental demand for accountability and transparency creates a political environment in which reform of the most opaque aspects of the defense sector is at least potentially politically feasible. Whether this opportunity is seized depends on the political will of the interim government and any elected government that follows it, the organizational capacity of reformers to translate intellectual analysis into practical legislative proposals, and the degree to which international partners make their continued engagement conditional on meaningful governance improvements.

8.3 The 2026-2040 Defense Policy Framework: Integrating Security, Economy, and Governance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Drawing together the analysis developed across this Part, a coherent defense policy framework for the 2026-2040 period would integrate the security, economic, and governance dimensions around a set of interconnected commitments.

On the security dimension, the framework would confirm the commitment to building a credible deterrent force capable of imposing unacceptable costs on any potential aggressor while maintaining the capability for effective internal security operations and humanitarian response. It would establish clear force planning assumptions about the threat environment and the capabilities needed to address it, providing the strategic foundation for procurement decisions that the current process lacks.

On the economic dimension, the framework would establish a fiscally sustainable defense spending trajectory that acknowledges the macroeconomic constraints Bangladesh faces while providing the resources needed to achieve the security objectives, financed through a combination of formal budget increases, off-budget mechanisms that are publicly disclosed and within defined debt sustainability limits, and progressive development of defense industrial revenues. It would establish the Defense Economic Zone and BOF expansion on sound economic foundations that include independent cost-benefit analysis, realistic market projections, and governance arrangements that separate commercial operations from military command authority.

On the governance dimension, the framework would commit to a program of legislative and institutional reform that progressively builds the civilian oversight capacity, military accountability mechanisms, and transparency requirements needed for genuinely democratic defense governance. This reform program would have a defined timeline and measurable milestones, with progress monitored by an independent oversight body that reports to Parliament.

The integration of these three dimensions is the defining challenge. Security investments that are not economically sustainable undermine themselves over time. Economic arrangements for the defense sector that lack governance accountability generate waste, corruption, and eventually political resistance that undermines both the economic and security objectives. And governance reforms that do not generate the institutional capacity needed for effective security provision fail on their own terms. Bangladesh's reform challenge is to advance simultaneously on all three dimensions, accepting the complexity and difficulty of doing so rather than treating any one dimension as sufficiently important to pursue independently of the others.

8.4 A Draft Legislative Agenda: Priority Legislation for Defense Political Economy Reform

The following legislative agenda, presented as a draft framework for policy discussion, identifies the priority legislation needed to establish the institutional foundations of the defense political economy framework described above. Each legislative item addresses a specific identified governance failure and would collectively transform the institutional landscape within which defense policy is made and executed.

Priority One is the Defense Finance and Accountability Act. This legislation would require the Ministry of Defense to present to Parliament, on an annual basis, a comprehensive defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

finance statement that includes the formal budget allocation, all off-budget financing commitments including government-to-government loan agreements with their principal amounts, interest rates, and repayment schedules, all contingent liabilities arising from procurement contracts, the revenues and expenditures of military-affiliated commercial enterprises, and the financial flows from UN peacekeeping reimbursements. The legislation would require independent external audit of all defense finance reporting, with audit reports made publicly available. It would establish the Comptroller General for Defense as an independent statutory official with access to all defense financial records and with reporting obligations to Parliament rather than to the Ministry of Defense.

Priority Two is the Defense Procurement Reform Act. This legislation would establish the legal framework for major defense procurement decisions, requiring competitive tendering above a defined threshold, independent technical evaluation panels with civilian expert membership, parliamentary committee notification before final contracting decisions above a further threshold, and post-delivery performance audit with public reporting. It would establish a Defense Procurement Review Board as an independent statutory body with the authority to investigate procurement irregularities, to refer suspected corruption for criminal prosecution, and to publish findings in public reports.

Priority Three is the Military Enterprise Accountability Act. This legislation would require all enterprises in which the armed forces or their welfare trusts hold a controlling interest to submit annual accounts to the Auditor General, to have those accounts independently audited by qualified external auditors, and to make summary financial information publicly available. It would prohibit military commercial enterprises from competing in civilian markets without explicit parliamentary authorization granted on a category-by-category basis following public consultation. It would establish the principle that military enterprise proceeds, beyond the operational costs of the enterprise, must be used exclusively for defined veteran welfare purposes through publicly accountable delivery mechanisms.

Priority Four is the Parliamentary Defense Oversight Enhancement Act. This legislation would establish the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense as a statutory committee with defined powers, including the power to compel document production and witness testimony, the right to receive classified briefings from defense officials under defined security arrangements, and the obligation of government to respond formally to committee reports within ninety days. It would fund the committee's professional staff at a level adequate to support genuine independent analysis rather than dependence on government-provided information.

Priority Five is the Defense Veterans Welfare Act. This legislation would create a Veterans Welfare Fund as a dedicated statutory body separate from the military enterprise structure, funded from a defined annual budget allocation plus defined percentages of military enterprise proceeds. The Fund would deliver welfare benefits to veterans and their families through entitlement-based mechanisms rather than through discretionary enterprise cross-subsidization, and would be governed by an independent board that includes veteran representatives elected by beneficiaries as well as civilian government and parliamentary nominees.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

8.5 The International Dimensions of Defense Political Economy: Partners, Conditionality, and Strategic Finance

Bangladesh's defense political economy is not simply a domestic matter. The international partners whose financing, equipment supply, training cooperation, and diplomatic engagement shape Bangladesh's security environment also have a stake in the governance of that environment. Understanding the international dimensions of defense political economy is essential to developing a complete picture of both the challenges and the opportunities Bangladesh faces.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank's engagement with Bangladesh's fiscal management creates an important point of intersection with defense political economy. The IMF's Extended Credit Facility program, which Bangladesh entered in 2023 and which continued to shape fiscal policy in the 2025-26 period, includes conditionality focused on fiscal discipline, public financial management improvements, and transparency. While the IMF has not historically applied its conditionality specifically to defense sector governance, the general principles of fiscal transparency, off-budget financing disclosure, and public enterprise accountability that underpin IMF conditionality are directly applicable to the defense sector's most significant governance failures. Advocacy by civil society and academic communities for the explicit inclusion of defense finance transparency in IMF program conditionality could represent an important lever for reform.

The United States' security engagement with Bangladesh, which includes training programs under various bilateral security cooperation mechanisms, military education through courses at US professional military education institutions, and equipment provision through Foreign Military Sales and Excess Defense Articles programs, creates a relationship that could be leveraged for governance improvement. US security assistance programs increasingly include provisions related to civilian oversight, transparency in defense finance, and human rights accountability as conditions of continued engagement. The activation of these provisions in the Bangladesh context, which has not consistently been the case historically, could provide meaningful external support for domestic governance reform efforts.

The European Union and its member states, particularly those with significant development cooperation relationships with Bangladesh, represent another source of potential external support for defense governance reform. EU development cooperation increasingly emphasizes governance as a cross-cutting condition for engagement, and the EU's own experience with building democratic defense governance institutions in accession countries through the European Security and Defense Policy provides a model and a source of technical assistance that could be adapted to Bangladesh's context.

China, as the dominant arms supplier and a major defense finance partner, has the most direct leverage over Bangladesh's defense procurement choices but the least interest in promoting the governance reforms that would constrain that leverage. Beijing's consistent preference for bilateral defense relationships that are not mediated through multilateral governance frameworks or transparency requirements means that the China relationship is unlikely to be a source of pressure for defense governance reform. Managing this asymmetry, maintaining the Chinese

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

partnership for the equipment and finance that Bangladesh needs while building the governance reforms that reduce the strategic dependency the partnership creates, is one of the most delicate elements of Bangladesh's defense political economy challenge.

CONCLUSION TO PART FIVE: THE INDIVISIBILITY OF SECURITY, ECONOMY, AND GOVERNANCE

This Part has developed a comprehensive analysis of the political economy of Bangladesh's defense sector, examining the theoretical frameworks that illuminate the defense-development relationship, the specific structures of the defense budget and its financing, the institutional dynamics of military commercial enterprises, the strategic and economic dimensions of the peacekeeping commitment, and the legislative and governance reforms needed to put Bangladesh's defense economy on a sustainable and democratically accountable foundation.

The central argument that emerges from this analysis can be stated with a clarity that all of the complexity of the preceding chapters supports: security, economic development, and democratic governance are not competing priorities in Bangladesh's national life. They are interdependent dimensions of a single project that succeeds or fails as a whole.

A Bangladesh that achieves impressive military capability through a modernization program financed by opaque off-budget borrowing, procured through processes that are riddled with rent-seeking and corruption, managed by an institution whose commercial interests have grown to the point of systematic political engagement, and overseen by parliamentary institutions that lack the access, expertise, and political will to exercise genuine accountability is not a Bangladesh that has solved its security problem. It is a Bangladesh that has created a new set of problems, fiscal, institutional, and democratic, that will eventually undermine both its security and its development.

Equally, a Bangladesh that achieves impressive economic development figures but fails to invest in the security capabilities needed to protect its territorial integrity, its maritime sovereignty, and the stability conditions on which its economic model depends is not a Bangladesh that has secured its future. The external environment is not benign, and the hypothesis that rapid economic development will in itself solve security problems by generating soft power and economic interdependence that reduce adversary incentives for aggression is empirically contestable and operationally insufficient.

And a Bangladesh that achieves some combination of military capability and economic development but does so through institutional arrangements that progressively degrade democratic governance, concentrate resources in military and political elite hands beyond public accountability, and squeeze out the private sector dynamism and civil society vitality that are the ultimate foundations of both security and prosperity is not a Bangladesh that has achieved its founding promise to the people who sacrificed for it in 1971.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Five has attempted to show that the path to all three objectives simultaneously requires a political economy of defense that is theoretically sophisticated, institutionally realistic, and governed by a clear commitment to democratic accountability. The legislation, institutional reforms, and analytical frameworks proposed here are offered not as final prescriptions but as contributions to the deliberation that only Bangladesh's democratic institutions, operating with the information, the authority, and the accountability to the Bangladeshi people that genuine democracy requires, can ultimately resolve.

Part Six will turn to the geopolitical environment in which Bangladesh's defense policy must operate, examining the specific bilateral relationships with India, China, Myanmar, and the United States, the multilateral frameworks of the Bay of Bengal region, and the emerging order of the Indo-Pacific that shapes the strategic context within which all of Bangladesh's security and development choices must ultimately be situated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FIVE

Theoretical and Conceptual Sources

Benoit, Emile. Defense and Economic Growth in Developing Countries. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1973.

Buchanan, James M. and Gordon Tullock. The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Second edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.

Chan, Steve. "The Impact of Defense Spending on Economic Performance: A Survey of Evidence and Problems." Orbis 29, no. 2 (1985): 403-434.

Cohen, Eliot. Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime. New York: Free Press, 2002.

Feaver, Peter D. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Feinstein, Andrew. The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Huntington, Samuel P. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Johnson, Chalmers. MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy 1925-1975. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982.

Mintz, Alex and Michael D. Ward. "The Political Economy of Military Spending in Israel." American Political Science Review 83, no. 2 (1989): 521-533.

Schiff, Rebecca L. The Military and Domestic Politics: A Concordance Theory of Civil-Military Relations. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

Siddiqa, Ayesha. Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy. London: Pluto Press, 2007.

Stepan, Alfred C. Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Bangladesh-Specific Sources

Bangladesh Army: Documenting its Corporate Interests. Observer Research Foundation, 2018.

Bangladesh Army Showcases Indigenous Defence Products at World Defence Show 2026. bdmilitary.com, February 2026.

Bangladesh Ordnance Factories Expansion Plan 2025 to 2035. bdmilitary.com, April 2025.

Bangladesh's Defence Budget and Purchases at a Glance. Bangladesh Defence Journal, December 2025.

Bangladesh's Defence Economic Zone: A Strategic Pivot Toward Military Industrialisation. bdmilitary.com, June 2025.

Bangladesh's FY2025-26 Defence and Public Security Budget Reflects Austerity Priorities. bdmilitary.com, June 2025.

Bangladesh in UN Peacekeeping: A Legacy of Blue Helmets. Eurasia Review, May 2024.

Bangladesh Increases Defence Budget but Gains Offset by Inflation. Jane's Defence Weekly, June 2025.

Bangladesh Pledges Specialized Units at 2025 Berlin UN Peacekeeping Ministerial. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, May 2025.

Bangladesh's Role in UN Peacekeeping: Challenges, Achievements and Future Strategies. The Business Standard, February 2024.

BMTF-HIT Joint Venture Talks Signal New Era for Bangladesh Defence Manufacturing. bdmilitary.com, February 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Building Defence Industry in Bangladesh. New Age Bangladesh, 2023.

Faruque, Taufiq E. and Rubiat Saimum. Bangladesh's Defence Diversification and Pivot to Networked Security. 9dashline, February 2026.

Govt Plans to Boost Defence Industry Investments. Jago News, April 2025.

How Far Behind is Bangladesh in Defence Manufacturing? The Business Standard, November 2025.

Military Budget of Bangladesh. Wikipedia, updated March 2026.

Raising Bangladesh's Defence Ambition: Strategies for Sustainable Spending and Indigenous Capability. bdmilitary.com, April 2026.

Revisiting Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh's Military Modernization Plan Under the New Government. The Diplomat, December 2024.

Sena Kalyan Sangstha Overview. www.senakalyan.org, accessed April 2026.

The Trouble with Bangladesh's Military. The Diplomat, March 2018.

Statement at the General Debate on Peacekeeping Operations in All Their Aspects. Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the United Nations, November 2025.

Will US Cuts in Peacekeeping Mission Deepen Bangladesh's Political Turmoil? Eurasia Review, April 2025.

Comparative and International Sources

Australia Department of Defence. Defence Strategic Review 2023. Canberra: DoD, 2023.

International Monetary Fund. Bangladesh: Request for Extended Credit Facility. Washington: IMF, 2023.

Mietzner, Marcus. Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia. Singapore: ISEAS, 2009.

SIPRI Yearbook 2025: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Military Expenditure Database 2024-2025. Updated March 2026. www.sipri.org.

United Nations Department of Peace Operations. Uniformed Capabilities Support Manual. New York: UNDPO, 2020.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

World Bank. Bangladesh Development Update: Economic Resilience in Challenging Times. Washington: World Bank, 2025.

End of Part Five

Part Six will examine the geopolitical environment of Bangladesh's security, including the specific bilateral security relationships with India, China, Myanmar, and the United States, the emerging multilateral frameworks for Bay of Bengal security governance, and the strategic implications of the Indo-Pacific competition for a state that occupies one of its most consequential geographic positions.

PART SIX: THE GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF BANGLADESH'S SECURITY: BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS, REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS, AND THE INDO-PACIFIC ORDER

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART SIX

If Part Five was concerned with the internal architecture of Bangladesh's defense economy, Part Six turns outward to confront the international environment within which that architecture must function and within which all of Bangladesh's security choices must ultimately be situated. The external geopolitical environment is not merely a backdrop to Bangladesh's defense policy deliberations. It is the primary driver of the security requirements those deliberations are meant to address, and it is the decisive context within which any particular policy choice will either succeed or fail.

The external environment facing Bangladesh in 2026 is simultaneously more dangerous, more fluid, and more consequential for the country's long-term trajectory than at any point since independence in 1971. The July Revolution of 2024 did not merely change who governed Bangladesh domestically. It reconfigured, sometimes dramatically and sometimes subtly, almost

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

every major bilateral relationship Bangladesh maintains, opened new diplomatic possibilities in some directions while closing or constricting others, and thrust Bangladesh onto the front pages of international strategic analysis in ways it had rarely occupied before. The country that was once dismissed in strategic literature as a perpetual victim of geography and history has become, in the language of 2025 and 2026, a contested pivot state in the Indo-Pacific's emerging great power competition.

This transformation creates both opportunity and danger. The opportunity lies in Bangladesh's enhanced bargaining leverage: states and powers that once took Bangladeshi cooperation largely for granted now compete for it, and a country with multiple credible partners has more room to extract concessions, terms, and respect than one that was effectively locked into a single strategic relationship. The danger lies in being caught in the crossfire of competitions that Bangladesh did not initiate and cannot control, becoming, in the phrase that Bangladeshi analysts have used with some alarm, a battlefield for the hegemonic ambitions of powers far larger than itself.

Part Six works through the major dimensions of this geopolitical environment systematically. It examines the foundational bilateral relationships in turn: the India relationship, which is simultaneously the most consequential and most currently troubled; the China relationship, which has deepened strategically following the political transition and now provides both economic sustenance and defense capability but at costs to strategic autonomy that require honest reckoning; the Myanmar relationship, which has been upended by the Arakan Army's dramatic territorial gains and the consequent emergence of a non-state actor as Bangladesh's effective neighbor along its southeastern border; the United States relationship, which is being actively restructured around the logic of Indo-Pacific competition in ways that offer both resources and risks; and the relationships with other significant partners including Turkey, Japan, South Korea, and the Gulf states. It then turns to the multilateral frameworks through which Bangladesh engages regionally and globally, examining BIMSTEC, SAARC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative, and Bangladesh's relationship to the emerging Indo-Pacific architecture. It concludes with a philosophical and jurisprudential examination of sovereignty, non-alignment, and the theoretical frameworks through which Bangladesh can most coherently understand and navigate its complex international environment.

Throughout, the analysis maintains the standards established in earlier parts: intellectual honesty about Bangladesh's constraints and limitations, rigor in the application of theoretical frameworks to specific empirical questions, and a consistently normative commitment to the goal of securing Bangladesh's sovereignty, prosperity, and democratic integrity in an international environment that does not automatically favor any of those objectives.

CHAPTER ONE: THE INDIA RELATIONSHIP: BETWEEN STRUCTURAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND ACUTE TENSION

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 The Architecture of Bilateral Relations: Asymmetry, Interdependence, and History

The relationship between Bangladesh and India is among the most complex bilateral relationships in Asia. It is complex because its dimensions are so numerous and so varied in their emotional valence: India is simultaneously Bangladesh's liberator and its overbearing neighbor, its largest trading partner and its most contentious competitor, the source of essential water resources it does not equitably share and the host of millions of Bangladeshi workers whose remittances support families across the country. The relationship is shaped by geographical reality that no political decision can alter, by historical memory that will not fade, by economic interdependence that neither side can afford to abandon, and by political dynamics on both sides that repeatedly generate friction even when the underlying interests of both states point toward cooperation.

The structural facts of the relationship are worth stating plainly. India surrounds Bangladesh on three sides, a geographical embrace that is unique in the world for a country of Bangladesh's size and population density. The two countries share a land border of approximately 4,156 kilometers, making it one of the longest land borders between any two states. Fifty-four rivers cross the Bangladesh-India border, making water-sharing one of the most permanent and consequential issues in bilateral relations. India's economy is roughly twelve times the size of Bangladesh's, and India's military capability, as previously analyzed, is overwhelmingly superior by any measure.

This structural asymmetry does not render Bangladesh powerless, but it fundamentally shapes the negotiating context for every bilateral issue. Bangladesh cannot achieve through confrontation what it sometimes needs to achieve through persuasion and creative diplomacy. And India, whatever its political leadership's particular preferences at any given moment, has strategic interests in Bangladesh's stability, in access to Bangladesh's territory for connectivity to its northeastern states, in the continuation of anti-insurgency cooperation that the Hasina government provided, and in preventing Bangladesh from becoming a platform for hostile influence from China or Pakistan that it will not willingly sacrifice through excessive pressure.

The historical memory that shapes this relationship operates on both sides with considerable force. Bangladesh's liberation in 1971 was made possible in decisive measure by Indian military intervention and Indian diplomatic support, and the relationship between the two states was born under conditions of deep gratitude and alliance. But this founding moment of solidarity has been complicated by every subsequent decade of a relationship in which the power asymmetry has expressed itself in ways that have generated resentment: India's periodic economic pressure, its perceived interference in Bangladeshi domestic politics, its border killings of Bangladeshi citizens by the Border Security Force, its failures to reach equitable water-sharing agreements, and its apparent preference for governments in Dhaka that are willing to accommodate Indian interests over governments that prioritize Bangladeshi sovereignty.

1.2 The "Golden Era" and Its Collapse: 2009 to 2024

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The period from 2009 to 2024, which Indian officials and commentators described as a "shonali adhyay" or golden era of bilateral relations, was constructed on a specific set of arrangements between the Hasina government and New Delhi that delivered genuine benefits to both sides while creating dynamics on the Bangladeshi side that would eventually contribute to Hasina's political downfall.

From India's perspective, the golden era delivered unprecedented strategic gains. The Hasina government dismantled the infrastructure of Indian insurgent groups that had operated from Bangladeshi territory, arresting and extraditing leadership figures from the United Liberation Front of Asom, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, and other organizations that had long plagued India's northeastern states. Bangladesh enabled Indian transit access, including the rail connectivity for goods movement and the energy import arrangements through the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline that delivers petroleum products from Assam refineries to the Bangladeshi market. Bangladesh maintained consistent restraint on issues, particularly relating to the Chinese deepwater port aspirations at Chittagong, that were sensitive for India's strategic calculations. In exchange, India provided political backing for the Hasina government that was understood by both sides as a significant contribution to the ruling party's continued hold on power.

From Bangladesh's perspective, the golden era narrative obscured a set of fundamental grievances that remained unaddressed throughout fifteen years of ostensibly warm relations. The Teesta water-sharing agreement, which had been negotiated and was effectively ready for signing in 2011, was blocked by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's political opposition and was still unresolved more than a decade later despite repeated assurances from New Delhi that it would eventually be concluded. The Border Security Force continued to kill Bangladeshi citizens along the border at a rate that had no parallel in international practice among states that claimed to be friendly partners. India's trade policies maintained significant barriers to Bangladeshi exports, particularly in agricultural products and garments, that limited Bangladesh's ability to translate economic proximity into commercial benefit. And the perception of Indian influence over Bangladeshi domestic politics, whether or not it was as extensive as critics claimed, generated an anti-India sentiment among Bangladeshi citizens that the Hasina government's accommodation of Indian preferences consistently inflamed.

The July 2024 Revolution, which ended Hasina's rule and installed the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government, thus represented not merely a change of government in Dhaka but the collapse of an entire bilateral arrangement that had served India's interests in specific and important ways. India's response, including Hasina's refuge in New Delhi, the subsequent refusal to extradite her following her death sentence by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal, and the reduction of visa issuances from approximately 8,000 to roughly 1,000 daily, reflected both genuine confusion about how to manage the relationship with a government whose political orientation was fundamentally less accommodating and a degree of institutional stubbornness that analysts across the political spectrum identified as counterproductive.

1.3 The Crisis of 2024-2025: Dimensions and Dynamics

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The eighteen months following the July 2024 Revolution saw Bangladesh-India relations deteriorate to their lowest point in decades through a cascading series of incidents, miscalculations, and structural tensions that fed upon each other in ways that neither government seemed fully able to manage.

The Hasina asylum issue was the most immediate and symbolically charged irritant. India's provision of refuge to a leader who had fled her country under the pressure of a popular uprising, and whose government's security forces had killed hundreds of students during the uprising, was experienced in Bangladesh as a profound insult to the revolutionary movement and to Bangladeshi sovereignty. When the International Crimes Tribunal subsequently convicted Hasina in absentia and sentenced her to death for crimes against humanity, New Delhi's continued provision of sanctuary became even more politically charged, making normal diplomatic engagement between the two governments extremely difficult.

The communal dimension of the crisis added a layer of dangerous complexity. Reports of anti-Hindu violence in Bangladesh, some documented and some contested or exaggerated, generated massive public protests in India, vandalism at Bangladeshi diplomatic facilities in Tripura, and an Indian narrative about the persecution of minorities under the new Bangladeshi government that Dhaka characterized as a "war of narratives" designed to delegitimize the political transition. The December 2025 assassination of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent leader of the July uprising who was subsequently reported to have been targeted by figures associated with the Awami League with alleged Indian connections, brought the crisis to what one analysis described as a "historic breaking point," triggering massive anti-India demonstrations in Dhaka and speculation about direct Indian involvement in violence against Bangladesh's new political order.

The economic dimensions of the crisis were equally consequential. India unilaterally imposed trade restrictions, particularly on road-based trade that affected significant volumes of Bangladeshi jute and garment exports, generating what analysts calculated as export losses of approximately 7.7 billion USD to Bangladesh while also reducing Indian exports to Bangladesh by around 6.2 percent, demonstrating the mutual costs of economic confrontation between deeply interdependent neighbors. The dispute with Adani Power, whose approximately 800 million USD in arrears led the company to cut electricity supply to Bangladesh by half, illustrated how the commercial entanglements built during the "golden era" had created vulnerabilities in Bangladesh's energy security that could be weaponized in political disputes.

In mid-2025, India began expelling thousands of Muslims to Bangladesh, citing illegal immigration, at a time when elections in Indian border states including Assam created domestic political incentives for muscular immigration enforcement. Dhaka characterized the deportations as unlawful and politically motivated. Intelligence contacts between the two countries, which had been robust under the Hasina government, were severely reduced. The Pakistan dimension of the crisis, specifically the Yunus government's opening of diplomatic and economic relations with Islamabad, the visit of Pakistan's army chief to Dhaka twice in 2025, and the resumption of direct Bangladesh-Pakistan trade for the first time since 1971, was experienced in New Delhi as confirmation that a Bangladesh no longer aligned with India was actively courting its most important adversary.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.4 Toward a Reset: The Modi-Yunus Meeting, the February Elections, and the Path Forward

The signs of a tentative thaw in the relationship began to emerge in early 2026, driven by the recognition on both sides that prolonged confrontation served neither country's interests and by specific political developments that created new opportunities for engagement. The most significant of these was the Bangladesh National Elections of 12 February 2026, which produced a BNP-led government that, while historically less accommodating to India than the Awami League, recognized that a functional relationship with India was a strategic necessity for any Bangladeshi government regardless of political orientation.

The April 2025 meeting between Yunus and Modi on the sidelines of the Bangkok summit had already signaled that both leaderships recognized the imperative of engaging even under difficult circumstances. Their discussions included the Sheikh Hasina extradition question, border killings, the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty renewal, and the Teesta water arrangement, all long-standing issues that required high-level political engagement to make progress. While the Bangkok meeting did not resolve any of these issues, it established a diplomatic channel and demonstrated mutual willingness to talk that was significant given the depth of the preceding estrangement.

In March 2026, the early days of the BNP-led government saw the newly appointed Director General of Forces Intelligence make contact with Indian counterpart institutions, signaling a resumption of security and intelligence engagement that had been severely curtailed during the interim government period. Indian authorities' arrest of two Bangladeshi suspects for the Hadi murder in March 2026 provided a concrete demonstration of cooperation that helped reduce anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh. India continued to supply diesel to Bangladesh through the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline as part of the ongoing commercial arrangement, demonstrating that even during political crisis the two countries maintained essential economic cooperation that neither wished to destroy.

The structural challenges in the relationship remain formidable. The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty's expiry in December 2026 creates an immediate and high-stakes negotiation requirement. The Teesta agreement remains unresolved and is now further complicated by the Yunus government's engagement of China's Teesta River Comprehensive Management Project as an alternative or supplement to a bilateral arrangement with India, a development that Indian strategic analysts described as a deliberate provocation even as Bangladeshi officials portrayed it as a legitimate exercise of sovereign development choice. Border killings continue to occur, though at a reduced frequency from earlier periods. And the anti-India political sentiment in Bangladesh, energized by the revolutionary movement and given institutional form in the political parties that now dominate the post-election landscape, will make any Bangladeshi government's accommodation of Indian interests politically costly in ways that the Hasina government, operating in a more controlled political environment, did not face.

1.5 The Theoretical Framework: Structural Realism, Complex Interdependence, and the Bangladesh-India Dyad

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh-India relationship is best understood through the simultaneous application of two theoretical frameworks that are often treated as alternatives but that are in practice complementary for this specific case. Structural realism captures the power asymmetry dimension: India, as the vastly larger and more powerful state, has structural incentives and capabilities to dominate the relationship in ways that Bangladesh cannot prevent through purely military means, and Bangladesh must manage this structural reality rather than resist it directly. Complex interdependence theory, associated with Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, captures the dimension that pure realism misses: the extensive web of economic, social, environmental, and institutional ties between Bangladesh and India creates multiple channels of influence that operate in both directions, giving Bangladesh more leverage than a simple power comparison would suggest.

The water-sharing issue illustrates the complex interdependence logic with particular clarity. Bangladesh is structurally the weaker party in any negotiation about Ganges or Teesta water shares, because India controls the upstream flows and can, in principle, divert water before it reaches Bangladesh. But India is also dependent on Bangladesh's cooperation for its northeastern connectivity, for its anti-insurgency cooperation, for the stability of its border region, and for the maintenance of a regional order in which China's influence is not unchecked. These dependencies create a web of mutual vulnerability that Keohane and Nye's framework captures and that simple power-balancing analysis misses. Bangladesh's best negotiating position on water is not to threaten India, which it cannot effectively do, but to link water cooperation to the overall quality of the bilateral relationship in ways that make Indian intransigence on water politically costly in terms of the wider relationship.

The jurisprudential dimension of the water issue is also important and underanalyzed. International water law, as codified in the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, establishes principles of equitable utilization and the obligation not to cause significant harm to other watercourse states that apply directly to the Bangladesh-India water relationship. Bangladesh's theoretical legal case under these principles is strong: the Farakka Barrage's diversion of Ganges water, and India's management of Teesta flows, has caused documented significant harm to Bangladeshi agriculture, fisheries, and ecosystems that international water law provides Bangladesh grounds to challenge. The practical barriers to pursuing this legal case, the political costs of confrontation with a neighbor of India's power, the inadequacy of enforcement mechanisms in international water law, and the risk of provoking a response that makes the overall relationship worse, are real and significant. But maintaining the legal argument and building the evidentiary record that would support it is a legitimate exercise of legal and diplomatic strategy that Bangladesh should pursue more systematically than it has.

1.6 Policy Framework: Managing the India Relationship in the Post-Golden Era

A sustainable bilateral policy framework for the Bangladesh-India relationship in the 2026-2040 period must acknowledge several foundational realities simultaneously. The relationship cannot be based on the subordination model that characterized the golden era, in which Bangladesh's accommodation of Indian interests was treated as a precondition for the functioning of the relationship at all. Such a model is politically unsustainable in the transformed Bangladeshi

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

political environment of the post-July Revolution period, and it was ultimately self-defeating in strategic terms because it generated the anti-Indian sentiment that contributed to its own collapse. But the relationship also cannot be based on confrontation or strategic alternatives, because Bangladesh's dependence on stable relations with India is structural and real in ways that no amount of diversification toward China or Pakistan can fully offset.

The sustainable framework is one of mutual respect, clearly articulated interests, and issue-specific cooperation and negotiation that does not treat the overall bilateral relationship as a hostage to any single issue. Bangladesh should be prepared to cooperate fully on shared security concerns, particularly the control of insurgent groups and cross-border crime, on the basis that such cooperation serves Bangladesh's own security interests rather than as a favor extended to India. It should pursue the water-sharing negotiations, the trade barrier reduction discussions, and the connectivity arrangements with equal vigor, linking progress on issues favorable to India to progress on issues favorable to Bangladesh in ways that reflect the genuine mutual interest both states have in a functional relationship. And it should manage the political communication dimension of the relationship more carefully, reducing the use of anti-India rhetoric as domestic political mobilization while building a domestic consensus about what Bangladesh actually needs from the relationship that is honest about its constraints and its opportunities.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CHINA RELATIONSHIP: FROM ECONOMIC PARTNER TO COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNER

2.1 The Evolution of Bangladesh-China Relations: Historical and Contemporary Overview

Bangladesh-China relations trace an arc from inauspicious beginnings to deepening strategic partnership over the fifty-plus years since formal diplomatic relations were established in 1975. China was Pakistan's closest ally during the 1971 Liberation War, cast its veto in the United Nations Security Council to block Bangladesh's membership immediately after independence, and was among the last major powers to recognize the new state. The historical memory of this opposition is not entirely absent from Bangladeshi strategic consciousness, though it has been substantially overlaid by decades of growing economic and political engagement.

The relationship's transformation accelerated in the 2006 to 2010 period, when China surpassed India to become Bangladesh's largest trading partner. This commercial expansion reflected both the globalization of Chinese manufacturing exports and the strategic calculations of both governments: Bangladesh saw Chinese investment and equipment supply as a means of reducing dependence on India and diversifying its external partnerships, while China saw Bangladesh as a strategically positioned partner in its Belt and Road Initiative and as a market and security partner of increasing importance in the Bay of Bengal region.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

President Xi Jinping's 2016 visit to Dhaka formalized the relationship as a "strategic partnership of cooperation," establishing the twin pillars of defense and economy that now define the bilateral framework. Under this framework, China became Bangladesh's dominant defense supplier, providing submarines, frigates, corvettes, fighters, tanks, artillery systems, air defense platforms, and a wide range of other equipment that constitutes the backbone of Bangladesh's current military inventory. China also became the financier of major infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative framework, including the Padma Bridge Rail Link, the Payra Power Plant, and the Karnaphuli Tunnel, investments that have contributed meaningfully to Bangladesh's infrastructure development while creating financial obligations that are not always transparently disclosed.

2.2 The Post-July Revolution Deepening: Yunus's China Visit and Its Strategic Significance

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's choice of Beijing as the destination for his first official overseas visit, undertaken between 26 and 29 March 2025, carried deep strategic symbolism that was interpreted differently by different audiences. From Beijing's perspective, it signaled that the new Bangladeshi government, whatever its domestic political orientation, recognized China as Bangladesh's most important external partner and was prepared to deepen the relationship. From Washington's and New Delhi's perspectives, it raised concerns about the direction of Bangladesh's strategic alignment in the post-Hasina period. From Dhaka's own perspective, it was, as the interim government characterized it, a pragmatic exercise in economic diplomacy designed to secure Chinese investment, loan term renegotiation, and continued support during a politically and economically vulnerable transition period.

The outcomes of the March 2025 visit were substantive and documented. Bangladesh secured 2.1 billion USD in investments and grants, bringing total Chinese investment to nearly 42 billion USD by fiscal year 2024-25. China agreed to extend the repayment period on existing concessional loans from twenty to thirty years and expressed willingness to consider reducing interest rates, responding to Bangladesh's request for improved loan terms. Eight memoranda of understanding covering cultural exchanges, media collaboration, sports, health, and economic and technological cooperation were signed. China pledged to maintain duty-free and quota-free access for Bangladeshi products for three years following Bangladesh's graduation from Least Developed Country status in 2026, addressing one of Bangladesh's most pressing trade policy concerns.

During the visit, Yunus positioned Bangladesh strategically in his public statements as a potential extension of China's economic reach into the Bay of Bengal region, describing the Bay as "China's economic extension" in language that attracted significant international attention and consternation. This framing, whether a deliberate strategic signal or an improvised diplomatic gesture, illustrated both the opportunity and the risk of Bangladesh's deepened China engagement: the opportunity to leverage China's strategic interest in Bangladesh's geographic position into economic concessions and investment, and the risk of being seen as aligning so closely with China's strategic vision that Bangladesh's proclaimed non-alignment becomes conceptually incoherent.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The September 2025 China-Bangladesh Think Tank Forum in Kunming, organized under the theme of deepening the "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership," and the June 2025 vice-ministerial level trilateral meeting involving Bangladesh, China, and Pakistan in Kunming, both reflected China's systematic cultivation of Bangladesh as a partner in its broader regional strategy. The trilateral format was particularly significant: it formalized a diplomatic architecture that brought together China's two closest South Asian partners in a framework that pointedly excluded India, creating what strategic analysts described as the emerging China-Pakistan-Bangladesh strategic triangle that was reshaping South Asian geopolitics.

2.3 The Defense Dimension: Arms Dependency and Strategic Leverage

The defense dimension of Bangladesh-China relations has been analyzed in detail in earlier parts of this textbook, but its geopolitical implications require further development here. China's role as Bangladesh's dominant arms supplier and defense financier is not merely a commercial relationship. It is a strategic relationship that creates dependencies, obligations, and leverage that operate across multiple dimensions of the bilateral relationship simultaneously.

The dependency dimension is straightforward and its implications are profound. Bangladesh's armed forces operate Chinese-supplied equipment across virtually every significant weapons category: submarines, surface combatants, fighter aircraft, tanks, artillery, air defense systems, and logistics vehicles. This operational dependency means that China possesses, through its control of spare parts, technical support, software updates, and upgrade pathways, a degree of influence over Bangladesh's military operational readiness that no other external actor approaches. An interruption of Chinese technical support for any reason, commercial, diplomatic, or strategic, could significantly degrade the operational capability of the Bangladesh Armed Forces in ways that the military's own leadership understands and must factor into all of its strategic planning.

The financial leverage dimension adds a further layer of dependency. The off-budget loan arrangements through which Bangladesh has financed major Chinese equipment acquisitions create debt obligations whose servicing will constrain Bangladesh's fiscal and policy space for years to come. These obligations, as analyzed in Part Five, are not fully transparent either to the Bangladeshi public or, it appears, to the civilian government. The ability of the Chinese government to adjust the terms, timing, or conditions of this debt service creates leverage over Bangladeshi economic policy that operates independently of any specific defense relationship consideration.

The strategic communication dimension of China's arms supply relationship is perhaps the most subtle but in some ways the most consequential. Bangladesh's acquisition of Chinese submarines, submarine-capable base infrastructure at Pekua, and advanced surface-to-air missile systems sends signals to India and other regional actors that are interpreted within the logic of military capability assessment regardless of Bangladeshi intent. From India's perspective, Chinese submarines operating from a Bangladeshi base in the Bay of Bengal represents a strategic threat that must be factored into Indian naval planning, creating a security dilemma dynamic that generates pressure on India to respond with its own capability enhancements and political pressure on Bangladesh.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.4 The Teesta China Project: A Case Study in Triangular Geopolitics

The Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project, which China offered to Bangladesh as an alternative framework for managing the Teesta River following the collapse of the India-Bangladesh bilateral negotiations that had stalled for over a decade, provides the clearest single illustration of how Bangladesh's geopolitical position at the intersection of major power competition creates both leverage and risk.

China's offer to manage the Teesta comprehensively, including water flow management, flood control, irrigation development, and ecosystem restoration, addressed a genuine developmental need for the Bangladeshi communities of the Rangpur division that depend on Teesta water. Rallies at Chittagong University in October 2025, demanding immediate implementation of the Chinese project, demonstrated that the political constituency for the project was real and energized. The project's appeal was amplified by the simultaneous deterioration of Bangladesh-India relations and the stalling of the Teesta bilateral negotiations that India had blocked through West Bengal's political resistance.

From India's perspective, Chinese infrastructure development and operational presence on the Teesta, a river that flows through Indian territory before crossing into Bangladesh, would represent an unacceptable strategic encroachment. The prospect of Chinese hydrological management on a river whose waters also irrigate significant areas of West Bengal and Sikkim touches Indian strategic sensitivities that go well beyond the Bangladesh bilateral relationship. Indian analysts uniformly characterized the Chinese Teesta project as a deliberate provocation, and Indian strategic responses to any implementation of the project could be severe.

Bangladesh's navigation of this triangular situation illustrates the broader challenge of managing great power competition from a position of relative weakness. The Teesta issue demonstrates that Bangladesh can use the threat of deeper China engagement to extract concessions from India, as in fact the original Chinese offer may have been designed to facilitate. But it also demonstrates that overplaying this leverage, actually implementing Chinese infrastructure projects that cross India's strategic red lines, could produce Indian responses that impose costs exceeding any gains from the Chinese arrangement. The optimal policy requires sophisticated calibration: maintaining enough engagement with China to keep the leverage real while demonstrating to India that Chinese engagement in sensitive domains can be constrained through successful bilateral negotiation.

2.5 The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Philosophical and Jurisprudential Assessment

The elevation of Bangladesh-China relations to what both governments describe as a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" raises important philosophical and jurisprudential questions about the meaning of partnership, the consistency of such a designation with Bangladesh's proclaimed non-alignment, and the obligations and expectations that the partnership framework creates.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

In the language of contemporary Chinese diplomacy, a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" is near the top of the hierarchy of bilateral relationship designations that China uses to differentiate its relationships with different states. It implies a breadth and depth of cooperation that goes beyond purely commercial or even defense cooperation, extending to political coordination, shared strategic objectives, and mutual support in international forums that constitutes something considerably more substantial than the relationship with a non-aligned state that merely happens to trade with China. Bangladesh has accepted this designation while simultaneously claiming that its foreign policy is guided by the principle of friendship toward all powers and alignment with none, a tension that is not easily resolved.

The jurisprudential dimension concerns the obligations that partnership agreements create under international law. If the comprehensive strategic partnership entails commitments to "political mutual trust and strategic cooperation," as the September 2025 Kunming forum's agenda described the first session topic, the question of what specific commitments Bangladesh has actually made and whether these are consistent with its international obligations and constitutional principles is not merely academic. If the partnership implies that Bangladesh will coordinate its positions with China in international forums, particularly on issues where China and India or China and the United States have opposing positions, this would represent a departure from non-alignment that has concrete implications for Bangladesh's relationships with other partners.

The philosophical tradition of non-alignment, as articulated by the Bandung generation of leaders including Indonesia's Sukarno, India's Nehru, and Egypt's Nasser, held that smaller states could maximize their freedom of action and their capacity to contribute to international peace by refusing to commit themselves to either of the great power blocs and instead building a coalition of mutual interest among states similarly situated. This philosophical tradition remains relevant, but the world of 2026 presents structural differences from the bipolar Cold War context in which non-alignment was conceptualized: the complexity of contemporary great power competition, the depth of economic interdependence that makes complete neutrality economically and practically impossible, and the specific vulnerabilities created by defense dependency on a single supplier all require updating the non-alignment concept for contemporary conditions.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MYANMAR BORDER: NON-STATE ACTORS, HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, AND THE COLLAPSE OF CONVENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DIPLOMACY

3.1 The Revolutionary Change on Bangladesh's Eastern Border

The transformation of Bangladesh's southeastern border environment between 2023 and 2026 represents one of the most dramatic and consequential developments in Bangladesh's security environment since independence. The Arakan Army's military campaign, launched as part of the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

broader Operation 1027 by the Three Brotherhood Alliance in October 2023 and prosecuted with sustained military effectiveness through 2024 and into 2025, destroyed the military junta's control over Rakhine State and established the Arakan Army as the de facto governing authority over virtually all of Bangladesh's 271-kilometer land border with Myanmar.

By December 2024, the Arakan Army had seized the strategic border town of Maungdaw, completing its effective control of all 17 townships in Rakhine State with the exception of isolated pockets that continued to resist. The Myanmar military's Western Command headquarters at Ann fell in December 2024. By early 2025, the Arakan Army controlled approximately the entire Bangladesh-Myanmar frontier, had established administrative governance over the majority of Rakhine State, and was engaged in consolidating its control against the residual Myanmar junta forces and against the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, which had shifted from fighting the junta to fighting the Arakan Army in defense of Rohingya communities in northern Rakhine.

This transformation fundamentally altered the framework within which Bangladesh managed its eastern border. Bangladesh had previously dealt with a recognized if deeply problematic state, the Myanmar government and military, with which formal diplomatic relations existed even when those relations were severely strained. The country now faces a non-state actor, the Arakan Army, that has de facto control over its border but no recognized international legal status, that Bangladesh cannot formally negotiate with without political complications, and whose own strategic objectives include elements that are in potential tension with Bangladesh's security interests.

3.2 The Arakan Army and Bangladesh's Security: Threats and Opportunities

The Arakan Army's consolidation of control over Rakhine State presents Bangladesh with a security environment that combines immediate threats with longer-term uncertainties requiring careful strategic management.

The immediate threats are documented and serious. The Arakan Army's forces have repeatedly harassed and detained Bangladeshi fishermen along the Naf River and in the maritime boundary areas around St. Martin's Island, shooting and injuring at least one fisherman, detaining dozens, and creating pervasive fear among fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on access to waters that the Arakan Army now claims to police. Mortar fire and artillery exchanges between Arakan Army forces and Myanmar junta holdouts have fallen on Bangladeshi territory, causing civilian casualties and displacement. Arms smuggling across the porous border has intensified as the chaos of the civil war creates new opportunities for weapons to flow into the refugee camp environment and from there into Bangladesh's broader criminal economy. Drug trafficking, particularly of methamphetamine from Rakhine's illicit production facilities, has continued and in some assessments intensified under the Arakan Army's governance.

In January 2026, Bangladesh issued a "high alert" along its Myanmar border after detaining fifty-three members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army who had crossed into Bangladeshi territory. The three-way conflict between ARSA, the Arakan Army, and Myanmar junta forces created a border environment in which the distinction between combatants and refugees, between

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

armed infiltrators and desperate civilians, had become operationally impossible to maintain with consistency. Border Guard Bangladesh deployed additional personnel, established restricted zones, and engaged in intensive surveillance operations while simultaneously managing the humanitarian imperative of not closing the border to civilians fleeing genuine violence.

The longer-term uncertainties concern the Arakan Army's intentions toward Bangladesh and toward the Rohingya population it now governs. The Arakan Army's nationalist ideology, the "Way of Rakhita" or "Arakan Dream," seeks to establish an independent or autonomous Rakhine state with a predominantly Buddhist Rakhine ethnic identity. This ideology creates structural tension with the interests of the Rohingya Muslim minority, and the Arakan Army's actual treatment of Rohingya communities in the areas it controls has been a subject of intense international scrutiny and significant concern. The International Crisis Group's June 2025 report on the danger of a Rohingya insurgency documented how Rohingya armed groups in Bangladesh's refugee camps were mobilizing to fight the Arakan Army across the border, a development that risks worsening intercommunal violence in Rakhine while also destabilizing the refugee camp environment in Bangladesh.

The strategic opportunity in the Arakan Army's emergence, paradoxically, lies in the possibility of a functional relationship with an authority that, unlike the Myanmar military, may have incentives to maintain a stable and cooperative relationship with Bangladesh. The Arakan Army depends on Bangladesh for informal supply chains, for access to markets, and for the maintenance of a border environment that does not produce crises that attract unwanted international attention. Bangladesh has been careful to maintain what the analytical literature describes as "unofficial contacts" with the Arakan Army, treating the relationship as a practical necessity for managing the border even while avoiding any formal recognition that would create complications with the broader international community. The interim government's appointment of a special adviser on Rohingya affairs and his subsequent role as Foreign Minister in the BNP-led government established a specific diplomatic architecture for managing this complex relationship.

3.3 The Rohingya Crisis: From Humanitarian Emergency to Security Imperative

The Rohingya refugee situation in Bangladesh has crossed the threshold from a humanitarian emergency into what can only be described as a structural security imperative. By January 2026, Bangladesh was hosting 1,182,755 Rohingya refugees from 245,998 families, including 143,327 new arrivals who had crossed the border fleeing the violence of the Arakan Army's advance and the junta's counterattack. The scale of this population, which has now been resident in Bangladesh for periods ranging from a few months to over three decades for those who arrived in earlier waves, and which shows no credible near-term prospect of repatriation, has created a set of security and developmental challenges that are qualitatively different from any conventional refugee situation.

The June 2025 International Crisis Group report documented the emergence of armed mobilization within the refugee camp population at an alarming rate. Rohingya youth, facing the despair of indefinite statelessness, inadequate humanitarian support as international funding declined under the pressure of competing global crises and US aid cuts, and the specific

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

provocation of witnessing the Arakan Army's control of their homeland, were being recruited into the networks of armed actors promising a future through armed resistance. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and newly emerging armed formations offered belonging, purpose, and income in an environment where legitimate livelihood opportunities were essentially absent.

This armed mobilization within the camps creates a security threat that is internal to Bangladesh as well as cross-border in its implications. ARSA and associated armed groups have historically engaged in criminal activities including extortion, murder, and trafficking within the camp population itself. Their cross-border operations against the Arakan Army, while motivated by what camp leaders frame as resistance to persecution, risk provoking Arakan Army retaliation against Bangladesh, against Rohingya civilians still in Rakhine, and potentially against Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts region, which the Arakan Army could destabilize as leverage against Bangladeshi territory being used as a base for Rohingya armed operations.

The funding crisis adds a dimension of genuine urgency. The 2025-26 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya crisis asked for 934.5 million USD to support 1.48 million people including both Rohingya refugees and affected host communities. US aid cuts threatened to severely reduce the international community's ability to fund even basic humanitarian services. Without adequate food, shelter, health, and education services, the conditions that drive armed mobilization, namely the combination of despair, idleness, and grievance, will intensify rather than abate.

Chief Adviser Yunus's warning in London in June 2025 that if the Rohingya are left with "no hope" there will be an "explosion" captured the essence of the security-humanitarian nexus in terms that resonated internationally. The challenge is translating this warning into a policy framework that goes beyond rhetoric: a Bangladesh policy on the Rohingya that is realistic about the current barriers to repatriation, creative about interim livelihood and governance arrangements that reduce the security risks of indefinite camp confinement, and engaged in the international diplomatic effort to establish an internationally recognized political framework for Rakhine's future that makes repatriation eventually possible.

3.4 Border Security Architecture: The Gap Between Need and Capability

The border security architecture on Bangladesh's southeastern frontier was designed for a qualitatively different threat environment than it now faces. The Border Guard Bangladesh, responsible for most of the land border, and the Bangladesh Coast Guard, responsible for maritime boundary enforcement, were organized and equipped primarily for border control functions including preventing unauthorized crossings, detecting smuggling, and responding to conventional cross-border incursions by state actors. They were not designed for an environment in which the effective authority on the other side of the border is a sophisticated non-state armed group with significant military capability, in which the flows of people, weapons, and drugs across the border operate at a scale that conventional border control mechanisms cannot address, and in which the political sensitivity of every operational decision is extreme given the international scrutiny on the Rohingya situation.

The immediate capability needs identified by BGB and border security analysts include enhanced surveillance technology, including drone-based reconnaissance that can monitor the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Naf River and the forested border areas where unauthorized crossings are most frequent. They include more robust physical barrier infrastructure along sections of the border that are currently unfenced or inadequately fenced. They include improved intelligence capability that can identify armed group infiltration before it reaches the Bangladesh side of the border. They include interagency coordination mechanisms that bring together BGB, the coast guard, the Rapid Action Battalion, the police, and the army in a joint border security structure rather than the fragmented approach that currently characterizes the eastern border response.

The longer-term capability needs are more fundamental. Managing a border environment in which one's neighbor is a non-state actor engaged in active military conflict requires legal frameworks, doctrinal adaptations, and diplomatic arrangements that Bangladesh's security institutions are not currently equipped to provide. The legal framework for engaging with the Arakan Army, for managing the status of ARSA members detained in Bangladesh, and for addressing the cross-border dimensions of the Rohingya armed mobilization are not adequately developed. The diplomatic frameworks for coordinating with China, which has significant influence over the Arakan Army and has been urging restraint in the conflict, and with ASEAN, which provides the primary multilateral framework for addressing Myanmar's governance crisis, require more sophisticated and better-resourced engagement than Bangladesh's foreign ministry has historically been able to sustain.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE UNITED STATES RELATIONSHIP: BETWEEN STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND DEVELOPMENTAL PARTNERSHIP

4.1 The Strategic Logic of US Engagement with Bangladesh

The United States' renewed strategic engagement with Bangladesh, which accelerated significantly following the July 2024 Revolution and intensified through 2025 and into 2026, reflects a specific set of strategic calculations within Washington's broader Indo-Pacific strategy that requires careful examination if its implications for Bangladesh's defense policy are to be properly understood.

The US Indo-Pacific Strategy, articulated formally in the Biden administration's 2022 framework and adapted but not fundamentally altered in its core geographic focus by the Trump administration's 2025 National Security Strategy, identifies the Indo-Pacific as the most consequential region for US strategic interests in the twenty-first century and the prevention of Chinese regional dominance as its central objective. Bangladesh's geographic position, sitting at the junction of South Asia and Southeast Asia, controlling the northern approaches to the Bay of Bengal, hosting one of the world's largest ports at Chittagong, and bordering both India and Myanmar, gives it strategic significance in this framework that its economic and military weight alone would not generate.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The specific concerns driving US strategic engagement with Bangladesh include the prevention of Chinese military access to Bangladeshi ports and facilities, particularly any arrangement that would give Chinese naval vessels operational access to Chittagong or to the Pekua submarine base; the maintenance of Bangladesh as a partner in maintaining freedom of navigation in the Bay of Bengal; the preservation of Bangladesh's democratic institutions against the possibility of authoritarian backsliding that would make productive engagement more difficult; and the building of an economic relationship robust enough to provide Bangladesh with viable alternatives to the economic dependency on China that is currently its most structurally significant external vulnerability.

The US approach to Bangladesh in 2025 and 2026 has operated through several channels simultaneously. The military engagement channel has included joint exercises under the Tiger Shark, Tiger Lightning, and Pacific Angel frameworks; training programs for Bangladeshi military officers at US professional military education institutions; Foreign Military Sales and Excess Defense Articles provision; and the symbolically significant Operation Pacific Angel 25-3 exercise held at the Bangladesh Air Force's Zahurul Haque base, which brought US C-130J transport aircraft alongside Bangladeshi military assets in what US officials described as a humanitarian cooperation exercise but strategic analysts read as a demonstration of operational interoperability.

The diplomatic engagement channel has been characterized by high-level contacts between the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chief Adviser Yunus in June 2025 regarding economic connections and Indo-Pacific stability, by US Special Envoy Sergio Gor's December 2025 discussions of trade, the approaching elections, and Bangladesh's political transition, and by the nomination of Brent Christensen as the US ambassador to Bangladesh with commentary describing the upcoming elections as "the most consequential in decades." The US nomination language around Bangladesh consistently frames the relationship in terms of democratic governance, economic development, and regional stability, the soft power framing of the Indo-Pacific strategy, while the hard power implications are addressed through the military engagement channel.

4.2 The Tariff Question and Economic Leverage

The Trump administration's imposition of a thirty-five percent tariff on Bangladeshi goods in July 2025, characterizing Bangladesh as a beneficiary of China's "trade deficit disparity," introduced a significant complication into the US-Bangladesh relationship that illustrated the limits of the partnership framing when it collides with American domestic trade policy priorities. Bangladesh's garment sector, which accounts for approximately eighty percent of the country's export earnings and employs millions of workers, is acutely sensitive to US market access conditions. The United States is Bangladesh's largest single export market, and a thirty-five percent tariff would impose costs that Bangladesh's garment manufacturers could not readily absorb through price adjustment or market diversification.

The tariff imposition was experienced in Bangladesh as a punitive measure that contradicted the partnership rhetoric emanating from other quarters of US policy toward Bangladesh. It also created a specific political problem for the interim government, which found itself squeezed

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

between the US's economic pressure and its dependence on Chinese economic support, the latter having just been reinforced by Yunus's Beijing visit. The diplomatic response included representation at multiple levels that the tariff was inconsistent with Bangladesh's status as one of the world's least developed countries and with the development principles that US foreign policy claimed to promote.

The tariff episode illustrated a fundamental tension in US engagement with Bangladesh that is likely to persist under any administration: the tension between the strategic logic of cultivating Bangladesh as an Indo-Pacific partner, which requires offering economic incentives and maintaining manageable economic relationships, and the domestic political logic of trade policy, which prioritizes US manufacturing interests and frames bilateral trade balances as measures of strategic competition rather than comparative advantage. For Bangladesh, managing this tension requires both diplomatic skill in maintaining the strategic relationship argument and pragmatic attention to ensuring that Bangladesh's economic importance to American manufacturers and consumers, through supply chain roles in garment and potentially electronics manufacturing, creates domestic American constituencies for maintaining favorable market access.

4.3 The St. Martin's Island Question: A Geopolitical Flashpoint

No discussion of the US-Bangladesh relationship can avoid engaging with the persistent speculation about US interest in St. Martin's Island, the strategically located coral island at the mouth of the Naf River where Bangladesh, Myanmar, and the Bay of Bengal converge. This island, Bangladesh's only coral island and a significant tourist and fishing resource, has become the subject of strategic speculation that has generated considerable political heat in Bangladesh without producing equivalent analytical clarity.

The speculation has centered on alleged US interest in establishing a military or intelligence facility on the island, and various versions of this story have circulated in Bangladeshi media and political discourse since at least the early 2020s. Some versions of the story, promoted particularly by Awami League figures after their ouster, attributed the July 2024 Revolution itself to a US conspiracy motivated by Hasina's alleged refusal to cede St. Martin's Island to Washington. These accounts have been widely circulated and politically significant even where they have not been credibly documented.

The strategic logic behind interest in St. Martin's Island is easy to construct: the island's position at the head of the Bay of Bengal, between Bangladeshi and Myanmar territorial waters, with clear sightlines to the Chittagong port approaches and the maritime boundary areas where China's strategic interest is growing, would give any power with facilities there a significant intelligence and surveillance advantage. China's interest in restricting American access to this position, and America's interest in maintaining surveillance capability over Chinese naval movements in the Bay of Bengal, are both intelligible within the strategic competition logic.

Bangladesh's sovereign interest is equally clear: St. Martin's Island is Bangladeshi territory, its disposition is a sovereign decision that cannot be made by any external actor, and any arrangement that compromised Bangladesh's sovereign control of the island would be a fundamental violation of the constitutional commitment to territorial integrity. The political

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sensitivity of this issue is extreme, and the fact that it has become a flashpoint in Bangladeshi political debate, regardless of the factual accuracy of specific claims, means that any government managing the US relationship must handle the island question with extraordinary care.

4.4 Defense Cooperation Beyond the Bilateral: Bangladesh and Quad-Adjacent Security Architecture

The expansion of US-Bangladesh military exercises and the increasing frequency of high-level defense contacts has generated attention from analysts about whether Bangladesh is being drawn toward the Quad security architecture, the informal grouping of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia that has emerged as one of the primary mechanisms for balancing Chinese power in the Indo-Pacific. Bangladesh has carefully avoided any association with the Quad as such, maintaining its non-alignment position and the procurement of Chinese defense equipment that makes formal security partnership with Quad members structurally complicated. But the pattern of engagement, including multilateral exercises that now include Sri Lanka and other non-Quad states, suggests a gradual and carefully managed expansion of security cooperation with Quad members that falls short of formal alignment.

Japan's engagement with Bangladesh in the defense and development space deserves specific attention as a dimension of this broader picture. Japan has recognized Bangladesh's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific framework and has expressed the view that Bangladesh needs to better utilize its geographical advantages. Japanese Official Development Assistance to Bangladesh has been substantial and has included significant infrastructure components. Defense-adjacent cooperation, particularly in maritime domain awareness, coast guard capacity building, and disaster response, has expanded alongside the economic relationship. Japan's role as a potential alternative arms supplier for Bangladesh, particularly in the naval domain where Japanese shipbuilding is technically sophisticated and politically untainted by the China dependency concerns that dominate Bangladesh's current procurement landscape, deserves more systematic exploration than it has received in Bangladeshi policy planning.

4.5 The Philosophical Challenge: Non-Alignment in an Era of Great Power Competition

The philosophical foundations of Bangladesh's foreign policy, articulated most precisely in the principle of "friendship with all, malice toward none" and in the Non-Aligned Movement tradition that Bangladesh inherited from the Bandung generation, face their most serious stress test in the competitive environment of 2026. The Cold War non-alignment was, in many respects, easier to practice than contemporary non-alignment: the bipolar structure of the Cold War created a clear two-bloc system between which smaller states could navigate, and the economic and security alternatives available from each bloc were broadly comparable, allowing genuine neutrality to be maintained without sacrificing essential economic or security interests.

The contemporary environment is more structurally complex. The economic interdependence with China, which provides Bangladesh's largest market for imports, most of its defense equipment, and a significant portion of its infrastructure finance, is qualitatively different from the relationship with any potential alternative partner. The depth of Chinese economic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

penetration into Bangladesh's economy means that any sudden or dramatic reorientation away from China would impose economic costs that Bangladesh cannot realistically absorb. At the same time, the military and strategic relationship with India, which is Bangladesh's neighbor in three directions and with whom Bangladesh's security cooperation is structurally essential regardless of political temperature, cannot be sacrificed to a China alignment without creating vulnerabilities that would be strategically catastrophic. And the deepening US engagement, including the military cooperation and economic partnerships that Washington is actively cultivating, creates attractions and pressures toward the American strategic framework that Bangladesh's formal non-alignment is increasingly difficult to accommodate.

The resolution of this philosophical tension requires what The Financial Express analysis described as a framework of "proactive, independent non-alignment": not the passive neutrality of traditional non-alignment that simply refuses to choose between blocs, but an active diplomacy that shapes the choices available, exploits the competitive interests of multiple powers in Bangladesh's cooperation, and uses the leverage created by strategic ambiguity to extract maximum benefit while minimizing the risks of entrapment in any single power's strategic logic. This is the foreign policy philosophy of a small state that understands its own value, that refuses to sell that value cheaply, and that maintains enough credibility with multiple partners to keep its options genuinely open.

CHAPTER FIVE: MULTILATERAL FRAMEWORKS AND REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

5.1 BIMSTEC: The Bay of Bengal Framework and Its Potential

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, or BIMSTEC, groups seven states around the Bay of Bengal: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan. It has existed since 1997 as a framework for regional cooperation across domains including trade, investment, energy, transport, tourism, and security. Its potential as a regional security architecture is considerably greater than what it has delivered in practice, and understanding why the gap between potential and performance exists is essential to thinking about how Bangladesh might better use BIMSTEC as a vehicle for its regional security interests.

BIMSTEC occupies a unique geographic logic: it groups the coastal states of the Bay of Bengal together with its immediate hinterland states in a configuration that reflects the genuine functional geography of one of the world's most important maritime regions. The Bay of Bengal carries approximately a quarter of the world's traded commodities, serves as the primary transit route for Middle Eastern energy exports to energy-hungry East Asian economies, and has become an increasingly contested strategic space as Chinese and Indian naval presence has expanded and as non-traditional security threats from piracy, trafficking, and illegal fishing have grown.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The security dimension of BIMSTEC has been the least developed of the organization's functional areas, despite the genuine common security interests that its member states share. Terrorism and violent extremism, trafficking in persons and narcotics, maritime security, disaster management, and energy security are all identified in BIMSTEC frameworks as priority cooperation areas, but the institutional mechanisms for operational cooperation in these domains remain thin. The organization lacks a secretariat with the resources, mandate, and political backing needed to drive genuine multilateral security cooperation rather than simply convening meetings that record agreed positions without generating follow-through.

For Bangladesh, BIMSTEC represents an important potential vehicle for advancing specific security interests in ways that are less politically exposed than bilateral engagements with individual major powers. Maritime security cooperation under BIMSTEC auspices, for example, could advance Bangladesh's interest in establishing surveillance and patrol frameworks in the Bay of Bengal without the political complications of bilateral exercises that immediately invite geopolitical interpretation. BIMSTEC's inclusion of both India and China's close partner Myanmar creates complexities, but also the possibility of building cooperative frameworks that include both powers in arrangements that are defined by functional rather than strategic alignment logic.

5.2 SAARC's Paralysis and the Search for Alternatives

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has been functionally paralyzed since 2016, when the eighteenth SAARC summit was cancelled following India's refusal to attend in response to cross-border terrorist attacks that India attributed to Pakistani state sponsorship. The organizational mechanism has not formally met since, and the political conditions that would allow its revival are not visible in the short term. For Bangladesh, SAARC's paralysis is both a symptom and a cause of the regional cooperation deficit that leaves South Asia the least integrated region in the world despite its geographic proximity and complementary economic structures.

The proposal for a South Asian grouping that excludes India, floated by Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser in language suggesting that forming a regional bloc with Pakistan was "possible, excluding India," represented a notable rhetorical departure from Bangladesh's traditional approach to regional architecture. The June 2025 Bangladesh-China-Pakistan trilateral in Kunming gave institutional form to this idea, creating a consultative framework that Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar suggested in December 2025 could eventually become a broader regional grouping, potentially an alternative to SAARC without India. This vision aligns with Chinese strategic interests in creating regional institutional frameworks that reduce Indian dominance of South Asian diplomacy and provide Beijing with mechanisms for advancing its regional agenda.

The philosophical and strategic costs of this approach for Bangladesh deserve serious examination. A Bangladesh that is seen as leading or participating in an anti-India regional initiative would sacrifice a degree of credibility with New Delhi that is strategically costly, given India's enduring structural importance to Bangladesh's security environment. It would deepen the association with China's regional agenda in ways that limit Bangladesh's ability to credibly claim

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

non-aligned status. And it would potentially close diplomatic options with India, the United States, and Quad-aligned partners who would interpret Bangladesh's participation in an India-excluding regional mechanism as a significant alignment signal.

The better approach for Bangladesh's regional multilateral strategy is to work simultaneously on multiple frameworks: advancing BIMSTEC as the primary vehicle for Bay of Bengal-centric cooperation, engaging constructively with whatever SAARC revival mechanisms become available, and using the trilateral and other new mechanisms as supplements to rather than replacements for the broader multilateral framework within which India is included.

5.3 The Bay of Bengal: Maritime Law, Blue Economy, and Strategic Competition

The Bay of Bengal is simultaneously Bangladesh's most important security challenge, its most valuable economic resource, and the arena of the most consequential strategic competition that Bangladesh must navigate. Its legal regime, established through Bangladesh's historic maritime boundary victories against India and Myanmar before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, gives Bangladesh sovereign rights over an Exclusive Economic Zone of 118,813 square kilometers that is among the most valuable of any country relative to its land area.

Bangladesh's 2012 maritime boundary settlement with Myanmar and its 2014 settlement with India established clear legal rights that are formally acknowledged by the relevant international institutions. The practical challenge is translating legal rights into economic development and security capacity. Bangladesh's Blue Economy initiative, which identifies maritime resources including fish, gas, mineral deposits, and maritime transport as priority development sectors, requires the naval and coast guard capability to enforce these rights against encroachment, the civilian institutional capacity to manage maritime resource development, and the international investment relationships to develop offshore energy resources at commercially viable cost.

The strategic dimension of the Bay of Bengal has intensified dramatically as China, India, and the United States have all expanded their naval presence and strategic interest in the area. India's SAGAR initiative, which articulates New Delhi's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region, is primarily an Indian Ocean construct but has specific Bay of Bengal dimensions. China's submarine patrols in the Indian Ocean, its port development projects in Sri Lanka and potentially other littoral states, and its growing maritime commerce that transits the Bay make it a de facto major player in Bay of Bengal security regardless of any formal institutional engagement. The United States' Indo-Pacific strategy specifically identifies the Bay of Bengal as part of the broader Indo-Pacific strategic space that Washington seeks to maintain as a free and open maritime domain.

Bangladesh's position in this competitive maritime space requires a specific strategic and legal framework. Maritime law provides the most durable and politically neutral basis for asserting and defending Bangladesh's maritime rights: UNCLOS principles of innocent passage, freedom of navigation within the EEZ, and the right to exploit EEZ resources exclusively are rules of international law that Bangladesh can invoke regardless of its relationship with any specific major power. Building the naval and coast guard capability to enforce these rights, and the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

diplomatic engagement to maintain international recognition of them, is the most secure long-term foundation for Bangladesh's maritime security.

5.4 The Indo-Pacific Outlook: Bangladesh's Conceptual Framework

Bangladesh formally articulated an Indo-Pacific Outlook in 2023 that established its conceptual framework for engaging with the Indo-Pacific strategic concept without accepting the explicitly anti-China dimensions of the American, Japanese, Australian, and Indian versions of Indo-Pacific strategy. The Bangladesh outlook emphasized an "all-inclusive" vision of the Indo-Pacific that promoted cooperation and stability among all states in the region, avoided military containment logic, and focused on economic development, maritime security cooperation, and multilateral institutional engagement as the primary mechanisms for advancing regional interests.

This framework, while intellectually coherent in its basic architecture, faces persistent challenges from the structural realities of the competitive environment it seeks to navigate. An all-inclusive Indo-Pacific vision that treats Chinese and American interests as equally valid and equally accommodatable is increasingly difficult to sustain as the actual rivalry between those interests becomes more acute. Bangladesh's attempt to position the Bay of Bengal as an economic rather than strategic space, as an arena for development and connectivity rather than military competition, reflects genuine aspirations and is worth diplomatic advocacy. But it also reflects, at least partially, a reluctance to choose that the structural logic of great power competition is making progressively more costly.

The philosophical tradition most relevant to Bangladesh's position is perhaps not the original Bandung non-alignment, whose postcolonial liberation politics are no longer directly applicable, but something closer to what Hedley Bull described in The Anarchical Society as the logic of international society: a recognition that states have common interests in maintaining a framework of international rules and institutions that allow them to coexist and cooperate even in an environment of power competition, and that smaller states have special interests in the vigor of that framework because they benefit most from rules that constrain the exercise of raw power. Bangladesh's most durable foreign policy asset is not any particular relationship with any major power but its credibility as a consistent, professional, and constructive participant in international institutions and norms, from its peacekeeping role to its maritime law compliance to its participation in multilateral arms control and non-proliferation frameworks.

CHAPTER SIX: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH MIDDLE POWERS AND THE DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA

6.1 Turkey: The New Strategic Partner

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Turkey's emergence as Bangladesh's second most important defense partner, after China, represents one of the most significant strategic developments in Bangladesh's external relations over the 2018 to 2026 period. The relationship has deepened with particular speed following the July 2024 Revolution, driven by a combination of practical defense supply considerations, political and religious solidarity between Dhaka's new political leadership and Ankara, and Turkey's own strategic interest in expanding its global defense export market and diplomatic footprint in South Asia.

The defense cooperation dimension is the most concrete and best documented. Turkish equipment now constitutes a significant portion of Bangladesh's land forces capability: Otokar Cobra armored personnel carriers equip the mechanized infantry, TRG-230 and TRG-300 Kasirga multiple launch rocket systems provide long-range precision fire, and ongoing negotiations cover potential acquisitions of Bayraktar TB2 and TB3 unmanned aerial systems, the SIPER long-range air defense system, and potentially JF-17 Block III fighters in a trilateral arrangement with Pakistan. Turkey's willingness to provide technology transfers and co-production arrangements, combined with pricing that is competitive with Chinese equipment and quality that is generally assessed as superior, makes it an attractive alternative for Bangladesh's military modernization in categories where Chinese dependency concerns are most acute.

The political and ideological dimension of the Turkey-Bangladesh relationship reflects shared religious identity, Erdogan's Turkey's leadership of political Islam in international forums, and the institutional connections between Turkey's AKP party and the political and civil society organizations that gained prominence after the July 2024 Revolution. Turkey's government recognized the interim government quickly and engaged with it positively, while its diplomatic establishment cultivated relationships with the BNP and with Islamic political organizations in ways that built a political foundation for the defense partnership that goes beyond purely commercial arms sales.

The strategic limitation of the Turkey partnership requires honest acknowledgment alongside its genuine contributions. Turkey is itself subject to significant geopolitical pressures, including its complex relationship with NATO, its management of the Russia-Ukraine conflict's spillover, and its regional competition with various Arab states and with Israel, that could affect the reliability of its defense supply in specific crisis scenarios. The JF-17 fighter arrangement, if concluded, involves Pakistani manufacturing and Chinese components in ways that create a supply chain exposure to Chinese leverage even for nominally Turkish-Pakistani equipment. And Turkey's membership in NATO creates regulatory constraints on certain technology transfers that Turkey cannot fully overcome, limiting the ceiling of what Turkish defense cooperation can deliver.

6.2 Japan, South Korea, and Italy: Building Western-Quality Alternatives

Japan, South Korea, and Italy represent the most important of the "middle power" partners that Bangladesh has cultivated in its procurement diversification strategy, all of them offering defense industrial capability comparable to the best Western suppliers at price points and with political relationships that make procurement feasible in ways that direct US acquisition would not be.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Japan's engagement with Bangladesh has been primarily through official development assistance and the broader economic relationship, with defense cooperation more circumscribed by Japan's constitutional limitations on arms export, which were liberalized but not eliminated by the Abe-era reinterpretation of Article 9, and by the political sensitivity of Japan being seen as directly militarizing Bangladesh's security capacity in ways that could complicate regional relationships. Japan's primary defense-relevant contribution to Bangladesh has been through coast guard capacity building, maritime domain awareness cooperation, and disaster response capability that aligns with Bangladesh's non-threatening self-presentation while building genuine security-relevant competencies. The broader Indo-Pacific strategic framework within which Japan views Bangladesh's importance creates a basis for deeper engagement if Bangladesh's political environment remains favorable.

South Korea's role is primarily visible in the submarine acquisition negotiation, which as of 2025 involved discussions of acquiring six improved KSS-I class submarines from South Korea as part of Bangladesh's naval expansion program. Korean submarines would represent a significant diversification of Bangladesh's submarine fleet away from exclusive Chinese dependency and would bring Korean technical standards and interoperability characteristics that are more compatible with Western partner systems than Chinese alternatives. The commercial relationship between South Korea and Bangladesh, already substantial through garment sector equipment supply and electronics trade, provides an economic foundation on which defense industrial cooperation can be built.

Italy's contribution has been primarily through naval systems, with Italian-designed or -produced equipment including frigate components, electronics, and naval gunnery systems integrated into Bangladesh's surface combatant fleet. Italian defense companies, particularly Leonardo and Fincantieri, have established relationships with Bangladesh's naval procurement establishment that make Italian participation in the indigenous frigate construction program a realistic possibility, bringing European engineering standards to the most ambitious of Bangladesh's defense industrial projects.

6.3 The Gulf States and Islamic Solidarity as a Diplomatic Asset

Bangladesh's relationships with the Gulf Cooperation Council states, particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, represent a dimension of its external environment that is simultaneously economically crucial, diplomatically significant, and strategically complex. Approximately seven million Bangladeshis work in the Gulf states, generating remittance flows that are second only to garment exports as a source of foreign exchange. This human dimension of the Gulf relationship creates a people-to-people connection of extraordinary importance to millions of Bangladeshi families and to Bangladesh's macroeconomic stability.

The diplomatic dimension of the Gulf relationship has taken on additional significance in the post-July Revolution period, as the new Bangladeshi political environment's greater emphasis on Islamic political identity has created a basis for engagement with Gulf states that goes beyond purely economic relationships. Saudi Arabia's investment in Bangladesh's Islamic educational institutions, its facilitation of Bangladeshi hajj pilgrimage, and its interest in Bangladesh as a labor source and consumer market all provide channels for a relationship that Bangladesh can

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

leverage for diplomatic benefit in ways that the Hasina government's more secular political orientation did not fully exploit.

The strategic complexity arises from the Gulf states' own geopolitical positioning, particularly their complex relationships with both China and the United States and their management of tensions with Iran. Bangladesh's energy dependence on Gulf petroleum creates a structural vulnerability to Gulf stability that is separate from, but interacts with, its other strategic dependencies. The disruption of Gulf energy supplies, as has periodically threatened in the context of Iran-related tensions in 2025, creates immediate pressures on Bangladesh's fuel supply and macroeconomic stability that remind policymakers of the connection between distant conflicts and immediate domestic security.

6.4 The Pakistan Reset: Historical Memory, Strategic Logic, and Political Risk

The resumption of Bangladesh-Pakistan relations following the July 2024 Revolution, including the resumption of direct trade for the first time since 1971, the easing of diplomatic passport visa restrictions, the visits of Pakistan's army chief to Dhaka twice in 2025, and the establishment of the Pakistan-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission for the first time in twenty years, represents one of the most politically charged diplomatic developments of the post-transition period.

The strategic logic of this reset, from the perspective of Bangladesh's proclaimed non-alignment and diversification agenda, is straightforward: any serious non-aligned strategy requires maintaining working relationships with all significant regional actors rather than boycotting one for historical reasons. Pakistan is a South Asian state with a shared Muslim-majority identity, potential trade complementarities, and regional diplomatic significance that makes complete isolation strategically irrational regardless of the painful history of 1971.

The historical memory dimension, however, is not merely emotional. The Pakistani military's conduct during the 1971 Liberation War, including the genocide of an estimated three million people and the systematic rape of two hundred thousand to four hundred thousand women, constitutes one of the most severe war crimes of the post-Second World War period. The normalization of relations with Pakistan's military establishment, which has never been held accountable for these crimes and which continues to deny the nature of what was done, represents a political and moral challenge that Bangladesh's new government must navigate with greater sensitivity than the breezy "strategic pragmatism" framing suggests.

The specific security concern for Bangladesh is that Pakistani intelligence agencies, the ISI in particular, have historically been active in supporting Islamic militant organizations that have operated in and through Bangladesh. The rapprochement with Pakistan creates channels through which these intelligence relationships could be restored or deepened in ways that create internal security risks for Bangladesh that are qualitatively different from other partnership arrangements. Managing the strategic benefits of Pakistani engagement while containing its security risks requires both domestic intelligence vigilance and a public framework for the relationship that is honest about its limits.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SEVEN: SOVEREIGNTY, NON-ALIGNMENT, AND PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR BANGLADESH'S GLOBAL POSITION

7.1 The Philosophy of Sovereignty in the Contemporary International Order

The concept of sovereignty, which is the foundational legal and political concept of the modern state system and which Bangladesh invokes in virtually every articulation of its foreign policy, requires philosophical examination that goes beyond its conventional use as a simple assertion of territorial integrity and non-interference. The sovereignty doctrine as it has operated in the post-Westphalian international order has always been more complex, more contested, and more practically limited than its rhetoric suggests, and the specific challenges Bangladesh faces in the contemporary international environment make that complexity particularly acute.

Sovereignty in its classical Westphalian formulation asserted the mutual recognition of states' exclusive authority over their own territories, combined with the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states. This formulation, codified in the United Nations Charter's Article 2(1) recognition of the sovereign equality of all members, provides the fundamental legal framework within which Bangladesh operates and which it consistently appeals to in asserting its rights against both Indian political pressure and Chinese economic leverage.

But sovereignty has never been absolute. Even in the classical period, powerful states routinely intervened in the domestic affairs of weaker states when their interests warranted it, while maintaining the rhetorical framework of sovereign equality. In the contemporary period, the sovereignty doctrine faces additional challenges from the responsibility to protect doctrine, which asserts an international obligation to intervene in states that commit atrocities against their own populations; from the growth of international human rights law that places legal constraints on states' treatment of their own citizens; from the environmental sovereignty challenges created by transboundary pollution and climate change; and from the economic interdependence that makes any state's purely autonomous economic decision-making a fiction.

For Bangladesh, the philosophical challenge is to articulate and operationalize a conception of sovereignty that is robust enough to resist the most damaging forms of external interference, particularly the kind of political manipulation and economic coercion that major powers have historically exercised against smaller neighbors, while being flexible enough to engage productively with the international institutions and multilateral frameworks through which the collective governance of shared problems requires pooling elements of sovereignty. The sovereignty concept must be, in other words, not a maximalist claim to complete autonomy that would prevent Bangladesh from benefiting from international cooperation, but a principled framework for determining which domains require zealous protection of decision-making independence and which domains benefit from deeper international engagement.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.2 The Non-Alignment Tradition: From Nehru to Yunus

The intellectual and political tradition of non-alignment that Bangladesh has invoked as the framework for its foreign policy since independence draws on a rich intellectual heritage that is worth recovering in some depth, because the contemporary appropriation of the non-alignment label often strips it of the philosophical substance that gave the original doctrine its intellectual power.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who was among the principal architects of the non-alignment concept along with Sukarno, Nkrumah, Nasser, and Tito, articulated the philosophy in terms that went considerably beyond a simple refusal to join either Cold War bloc. For Nehru, non-alignment was a positive vision of an international order governed by the principles of the United Nations Charter rather than by great power competition, in which newly independent states could contribute their perspectives and their moral authority to the construction of a more just international order rather than simply becoming pawns in a competition they had not created. Non-alignment was, for Nehru, a civilizational statement as much as a strategic calculation: the assertion that India, and by extension the other newly independent states of Asia and Africa, had something original to contribute to international life that would be obscured if they simply aligned themselves with one or the other of the existing great power traditions.

For Bangladesh's founding generation, non-alignment carried an additional dimension: it was the logical extension of the liberation struggle itself, which had asserted the right of the Bengali people to determine their own political future against the imposition of Pakistani domination. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's "friendship with all, malice toward none" was not merely a diplomatic formula but a statement of political philosophy: that Bangladesh's independence was based on a universalist commitment to the rights of all peoples to self-determination, and that Bangladesh could not consistently support those rights globally while aligning itself exclusively with powers whose global conduct was inconsistent with them.

Contemporary Bangladesh's challenge is to give content to this inheritance without either retreating into an empty formalism of non-alignment that ignores structural realities or abandoning the principled core of the tradition in favor of pure strategic opportunism that cedes the moral authority that small states' adherence to principle is their most durable diplomatic asset.

7.3 The Responsibility to Protect, Humanitarian Intervention, and Bangladesh's Position

Bangladesh's position on the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, developed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001 and formally endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, is directly relevant to its foreign policy framework for several reasons. As a country that was itself the beneficiary of international intervention, or more precisely Indian military intervention, that ended genocide and mass atrocity in 1971, Bangladesh has a specific historical experience with the tension between sovereignty norms and the international response to mass atrocities. And as the host of over 1.2 million Rohingya refugees who fled what the United Nations and the International Court of Justice have

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

characterized as genocide in Myanmar, Bangladesh is one of the states most directly affected by the failure of the international community to implement the Responsibility to Protect principle in a situation where its applicability was clear.

Bangladesh's position on R2P has historically been cautious and ambivalent. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and as a developing state that values sovereign equality, Bangladesh has been wary of doctrines that could be used by more powerful states to justify interference in the internal affairs of weaker ones. At the same time, Bangladesh's experience both in 1971 and through the Rohingya crisis has created a national understanding that absolute sovereignty, allowing states to commit atrocities against their own populations without international response, serves neither justice nor Bangladesh's specific interests as a country that has both benefited from and been made to suffer by the implementation failures of international protection norms.

The principled resolution of this ambivalence requires Bangladesh to advocate for a reformed R2P framework that strengthens genuine multilateral oversight and Security Council accountability, reduces the risk of major power abuse of intervention authorization, and builds the regional capacity for early warning and preventive action that reduces the likelihood of mass atrocity situations reaching the threshold that requires military intervention. Bangladesh's peacekeeping engagement, its participation in United Nations human rights mechanisms, and its consistent advocacy for the Rohingya cause in international forums all contribute to this framework in ways that are consistent with Bangladesh's interests and its values.

7.4 International Law, Treaty Obligations, and the Legal Framework of Bangladesh's Global Position

Bangladesh's global position is shaped not only by the geopolitical forces analyzed throughout this Part but by the legal framework of international obligations that both constrain and empower its foreign policy. Understanding this legal framework is essential to a complete picture of Bangladesh's strategic environment.

The most fundamental of Bangladesh's international legal obligations is the United Nations Charter, which commits it to the peaceful settlement of disputes, to collective security through the UN system, to non-aggression, and to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Charter framework both constrains Bangladesh's military options, prohibiting the use of force except in self-defense or with Security Council authorization, and empowers its diplomacy, providing the vocabulary and the institutional framework through which Bangladesh's principled positions can be advanced.

Bangladesh is a party to the principal international humanitarian law instruments, including the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, which govern the conduct of armed conflict and the treatment of prisoners and civilians. These obligations are directly relevant to the training and operational standards of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, particularly in the context of peacekeeping operations where Bangladeshi personnel must comply with international humanitarian law standards. They are also relevant to Bangladesh's engagement with the Rohingya crisis: the ICJ proceedings against Myanmar for genocide under the Genocide Convention, in which Bangladesh is a co-complainant alongside the Gambia, represent

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's most active use of international legal mechanisms to address the consequences of the mass atrocity that produced its refugee burden.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the legal framework for Bangladesh's maritime rights, establishing the legal basis for its Exclusive Economic Zone, its rights over the continental shelf, and its freedom of navigation claims in the Bay of Bengal. UNCLOS has been the most powerful instrument in Bangladesh's foreign policy toolkit in recent years, enabling it to successfully assert maritime boundary claims against both India and Myanmar through international adjudication rather than power politics. Continuing to build Bangladesh's capacity to use international legal mechanisms as instruments of foreign policy, including through investment in international law expertise in the foreign ministry and the building of domestic legal institutions capable of contributing to international legal processes, is among the highest-priority capacity investments Bangladesh's diplomatic establishment should be pursuing.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARD A GRAND STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH: SYNTHESIS, FRAMEWORK, AND THE PATH FORWARD

8.1 Defining Grand Strategy for a Small-to-Medium Power

Grand strategy, in the tradition of political and strategic theory from Edward Luttwak's analysis through Hal Brands' contemporary formulation, refers to the highest level of political-military planning: the integration of all elements of national power, military, economic, diplomatic, and informational, in pursuit of defined national objectives over an extended time horizon. Grand strategy is distinct from military strategy, which concerns the use of military force specifically, and from foreign policy, which concerns the management of external relationships, though it encompasses and directs both.

For Bangladesh, a state of its size and resource constraints, the articulation of a genuine grand strategy has historically been either absent or implicit rather than formally stated. Defense policy documents have addressed military capability in isolation from economic policy. Foreign policy frameworks have addressed diplomatic relationships in isolation from security requirements. Development policy has addressed economic growth in isolation from security provision. The result has been a fragmentation of national effort across different institutional domains that has reduced the overall effectiveness of Bangladesh's external engagement by comparison with what a more integrated framework would produce.

A genuine grand strategy for Bangladesh would define the national objectives that all elements of national power are directed toward, identify the threats and opportunities that the external environment presents to those objectives, and develop a coherent framework for applying military, economic, diplomatic, and informational instruments in combinations designed to advance the objectives while managing the threats. It would be stable enough to provide

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

continuity across government changes while flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. And it would be institutionally embedded in a National Security Council or equivalent body that has both the authority to develop the strategy and the mandate to coordinate its implementation across ministries and agencies.

8.2 Bangladesh's National Interests: A Clear Statement

Grand strategy requires as its foundation a clear statement of national interests, meaning the conditions that must prevail in Bangladesh's internal and external environment for the state to achieve its fundamental purpose of securing the welfare and sovereignty of its people. These interests can be organized into a hierarchy from vital to important to desirable.

Bangladesh's vital interests, those whose protection justifies the use of all available instruments of national power, are few but clearly definable. The physical survival of the Bangladesh state and the protection of Bangladeshi territory from conquest or occupation is the most fundamental. The maintenance of Bangladesh's constitutional order and democratic institutions against both external subversion and internal authoritarian capture is the second. The protection of Bangladesh's sea lanes and its Exclusive Economic Zone against encroachment that would deprive Bangladesh of resources essential to its economic survival is the third.

Bangladesh's important interests, those that significantly affect the welfare of Bangladeshi people and that should be pursued actively through all appropriate instruments short of the use of force, include the maintenance of stable and constructive bilateral relationships with India, China, and the United States; the successful management of the Myanmar border crisis and the Rohingya humanitarian emergency; the development of the Blue Economy and other productive uses of Bangladesh's maritime endowment; the maintenance of Bangladesh's position as a leading UN peacekeeping contributor; and the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism from establishing a significant operational base in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's desirable interests, those worth pursuing through diplomatic and other available means but not at significant cost to vital or important interests, include playing a leadership role in South Asian regional cooperation frameworks, becoming a significant defense industrial exporter, achieving advanced economic status as a middle-income country, and serving as a model of Islamic democracy that demonstrates the compatibility of Muslim-majority governance with democratic pluralism and international engagement.

8.3 The Grand Strategy Framework: Five Pillars

The grand strategy framework that this analysis suggests for Bangladesh can be organized around five interconnected pillars, each addressing a different dimension of national power and each connected to the others through the unifying logic of maximizing Bangladesh's strategic autonomy and developmental trajectory simultaneously.

The first pillar is credible conventional deterrence, meaning the maintenance of military capability sufficient to impose unacceptable costs on any potential adversary contemplating aggression against Bangladesh's territory or vital interests. The force structure and procurement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

priorities necessary for this pillar have been analyzed in detail in Parts Three and Four of this textbook and are not repeated here in detail. The key strategic point is that deterrence at Bangladesh's level requires asymmetric cost-imposition capabilities rather than symmetrical military competition with larger adversaries: anti-ship missiles, advanced air defense, precision artillery, and the submarine capability that complicates adversary naval planning are more strategically effective per taka spent than symmetrical force development would be.

The second pillar is economic diplomacy as strategic instrument, meaning the deliberate use of Bangladesh's economic relationships, its labor force, its market access, and its geographic position as a platform for developing leverage with multiple major powers simultaneously. Bangladesh's position in global garment supply chains, its growing importance as a manufacturing location for firms seeking to reduce China concentration risk, and its port access that connects multiple regional powers to the Bay of Bengal all represent economic assets with strategic dimensions that a sophisticated grand strategy would explicitly leverage in foreign policy negotiations.

The third pillar is multilateral institutional investment, meaning the sustained and strategic engagement with international institutions, from the United Nations through BIMSTEC to the international financial institutions, as a mechanism for embedding Bangladesh's interests in rule-based frameworks that constrain major power coercion more effectively than bilateral power politics can. Bangladesh's peacekeeping leadership, its active participation in UN human rights mechanisms, its use of international legal institutions for maritime boundary disputes, and its advocacy in multilateral forums for issues of importance to developing states are all manifestations of this pillar that deserve more resources and more strategic direction than they currently receive.

The fourth pillar is resilience building, meaning the systematic reduction of Bangladesh's vulnerability to external coercion through economic diversification, supply chain resilience, domestic democratic institutional strengthening, and the development of indigenous capability in key defense and technology sectors. The defense industrialization agenda, the energy diversification strategy, the procurement diversification across multiple suppliers, and the democratic governance reforms proposed throughout this textbook all serve this pillar. A Bangladesh that is less dependent on any single external source for any critical resource or capability is more sovereign in the practical sense that matters strategically.

The fifth pillar is principled normativity, meaning the maintenance of Bangladesh's reputation as a consistent, principled, and constructive member of the international community whose participation in multilateral institutions and international legal processes reflects genuine commitment to the rules-based international order rather than purely instrumental calculation. This pillar is the hardest to operationalize but in some respects the most important for a small state: the moral authority and credibility that come from consistent principled conduct are Bangladesh's most durable diplomatic assets and the most difficult for more powerful states to undermine or replicate through material means alone.

8.4 The 2026 Election and the Strategic Continuity Question

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The February 2026 general elections and the subsequent formation of a BNP-led government introduced a new political dynamic into Bangladesh's external relations that has implications for strategic continuity across the dimensions examined throughout this Part. The BNP's historically more nationalist orientation toward Indian relations, its stronger emphasis on Islamic solidarity and its associated openness to Turkish and Pakistani security partnerships, its traditional skepticism of some elements of Chinese economic engagement, and its attentiveness to Western, particularly American and British, governance preferences all create a somewhat different external orientation than the Awami League governments of 2009-2024 pursued or the Yunus interim government navigated.

The structural imperatives of Bangladesh's grand strategy, however, are more durable than any particular government's political preferences. No Bangladeshi government can afford to antagonize India to the point of destroying the bilateral relationship, because the geographic and economic dependencies are too fundamental. No Bangladeshi government can afford to abandon its defense relationship with China, because the military equipment dependency is too immediate and the economic relationship too large. No Bangladeshi government can afford to ignore the United States' strategic concerns, because American market access, multilateral institutional support, and diplomatic weight are too important to sacrifice. These structural constraints, operating within the framework of Bangladesh's grand strategy principles, create a degree of continuity in the basic orientation of Bangladesh's external relations that transcends changes in government.

What individual governments can do is vary the emphasis and tone of the relationship with each major partner, the timing and terms of specific diplomatic initiatives, and the pace of particular capability developments or institutional reforms within the framework that structural imperatives define. The BNP government's early movement toward diplomatic repair with India, signaled through intelligence contacts and the facilitation of the Hadi murder investigation, demonstrated exactly this pattern: a new government adjusting the tone and the institutional channels of a relationship whose fundamental importance it recognizes even when its political base demands anti-Indian posturing.

CONCLUSION TO PART SIX: GEOGRAPHY IS DESTINY AND CHOICE SIMULTANEOUSLY

The analysis of Bangladesh's geopolitical environment developed across this Part yields a finding that is simultaneously sobering and empowering. The constraints that geography, history, and power asymmetry impose on Bangladesh's foreign policy are real, documented, and non-negotiable. Bangladesh cannot choose its neighbors, cannot change the structural power differential between itself and India or China, cannot simply refuse the economic dependencies that decades of procurement, financing, and trade relationships have created, and cannot escape the consequences of strategic competitions between powers whose resources and reach vastly exceed its own.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

But constraint is not determinism. Within the space defined by geography and power, Bangladesh has genuine choices about how it manages its relationships, what kind of state it builds, what international norms it champions, how it uses the leverage that strategic ambiguity creates, and what long-term trajectory it pursues for its security, economy, and democratic governance. The history of small states in the modern international system includes numerous examples of states that, through strategic intelligence, institutional quality, and principled international engagement, achieved security and prosperity in environments that were structurally far more dangerous than Bangladesh's current situation. Singapore, Norway, Switzerland, and Israel are all examples, each in very different ways, of small states that converted geographic, resource, and power constraints into conditions for remarkable strategic achievement.

Bangladesh's path to such achievement runs through the agenda that Parts Five and Six together have articulated: a defense economy that is fiscally sustainable, institutionally accountable, and strategically coherent; bilateral relationships with all major partners that are managed with sophistication and principle rather than with either servility or confrontation; a multilateral institutional engagement that builds the rule-based frameworks within which Bangladesh's interests can be protected without constant resort to power competition; and a domestic governance quality that gives Bangladesh the institutional legitimacy and social cohesion that are ultimately the foundations of any genuine strategic capacity.

Part Seven will turn to the legislative architecture of national security, examining in detail the laws, ordinances, regulations, and legislative drafts that constitute the formal legal framework within which Bangladesh's defense policy operates, and developing proposals for the comprehensive legislative reform that the ambitions articulated across the preceding six parts require to become operational reality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SIX

Bangladesh-India Relations

After the "Golden Era": Getting Bangladesh-India Ties Back on Track. International Crisis Group Report 353, December 23, 2025.

Bangladesh-India Relations Are Back on the Brink. The Diplomat, December 19, 2025.

Bangladesh-India Relations: From Strain to Reconciliation. Eurasia Review, April 12, 2025.

Changing Dynamics of Bangladesh-India Border Relations. Geopolitics, March 2026.

The Great Divide: Why Bangladesh-India Relations Are at a Historic Breaking Point. Eurasia Review, January 3, 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Dimming of Bangladesh-India Relations. International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2025.

Interdependence Under Stress: The Future of Bangladesh-India Relations. Khabarhub, December 25, 2025.

Is the Ice Finally Breaking in Bangladesh-India Relations? The Diplomat, March 2026.

Bangladesh-China Relations

Bangladesh's Pivot to China: From Balance to Realignment. Observer Research Foundation Expert Speak, March 2026.

China-Bangladesh Relations 50 Years On. Global Policy Institute, June 29, 2025.

Exploring New Possibilities: Strengthening Sino-Bangladesh Strategic Relations in a Post-Uprising Era. Daira, July 24, 2025.

Pakistan-Bangladesh-China Strategic Geometry in South Asia. Eurasia Review, December 12, 2025.

Reimagining the Bangladesh-China Strategic Partnership. The Diplomat, April 14, 2025.

The Bangladesh-Pakistan-China Triangle and India's Strategic Dilemma. South Asian Voices, April 27, 2025.

Understanding Bangladesh-China Relations. Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies, 2023.

Bangladesh-Myanmar and Rohingya Crisis

Arakan Army: A Threat to Bangladesh's National Security? Geopolitical Monitor, June 12, 2025.

Bangladesh/Myanmar: The Dangers of a Rohingya Insurgency. International Crisis Group Report 348, June 18, 2025.

Bangladesh-Myanmar Border: A Persistent Threat to Bangladesh's National Security. Humanities and Social Sciences, Science Publishing Group, 2025.

Bangladesh Detains 53 ARSA Rebels, Issues Myanmar Border Alert. Prothom Alo, January 12, 2026.

The Graveyard of Rohingya Diplomacy: Is Bangladesh Stuck in an Exhaustion Trap? The Diplomat, April 2026.

The Rohingya: A Perceived Security Threat and the Dominant Issue in Bangladesh-Myanmar Relations. Asian Politics and Policy, Wiley, October 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Myanmar's Rakhine State at a Crossroads. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, May 2025.

On the Horizon: November 2025-April 2026. International Crisis Group, November 28, 2025.

Bangladesh-USA and Indo-Pacific

Bangladesh at a Strategic Crossroads: US Military Engagement as Counterbalance to China. bdmilitary.com, October 2025.

Bangladesh-US Military Exercises: Why India's Concerns Are Unfounded. Eurasia Review, October 2025.

Between Giants: Bangladesh's Strategy in the Indo-Pacific. The Financial Express, March 3, 2026.

From Chattogram to the Global Arena: US Solidifies Its Strategic Anchor in Bangladesh. The Borderlens, September 17, 2025.

Navigating Great Power Rivalry: What Does the New US National Security Strategy Mean for Bangladesh? Eurasia Review, December 29, 2025.

Strategic Importance of the Indo-Pacific and the Bay of Bengal. BIMRAD Journal, December 2025.

Where Does Bangladesh Stand in the US Indo-Pacific Strategy? The Geopolitics, 2023.

Theoretical and Comparative Sources

Bull, Hedley. The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Brands, Hal. What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Jervis, Robert. Perception and Misperception in International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye. Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977.

Luttwak, Edward N. Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace. Revised edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Mearsheimer, John J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. Updated edition. New York: Norton, 2014.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Nye, Joseph S. Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

Waltz, Kenneth N. Theory of International Politics. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

End of Part Six

Part Seven will examine the legislative architecture of Bangladesh's national security, including detailed analysis of existing defense legislation, constitutional provisions governing security powers, the legal framework for emergency and martial law provisions, proposed legislative reforms for democratic defense governance, and the comparative legislative models from which Bangladesh's reform agenda can draw.

PART SEVEN: THE LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF NATIONAL SECURITY: LAWS, ORDINANCES, CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, AND THE FRAMEWORK FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART SEVEN

The legislative architecture of national security is the formal superstructure through which a democratic state translates its strategic intentions into legally binding obligations, authorizations, and constraints. It is the body of law that determines who may authorize the use of force, under what conditions that authorization may be exercised, what rights citizens retain even during security emergencies, how military and intelligence institutions are governed and made accountable, and how the balance between security necessity and civil liberty is to be struck when those two values come into conflict. Without this architecture, defense policy is nothing more than institutional preference expressed through unconstrained power. With it, defense policy becomes a constitutionally embedded, democratically accountable, and rights-respecting

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

enterprise that can legitimately claim the consent of the governed whose lives it organizes for collective protection.

Bangladesh's legislative architecture for national security is, as of 2026, one of the most consequential and most urgently in need of comprehensive reform of any comparable developing democracy. The urgency flows from several sources simultaneously. The post-July Revolution transition has placed security sector reform at the center of national political debate in ways it has never occupied before. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in its landmark February 2025 fact-finding report on the violence of the July-August 2024 uprising, documented with forensic detail the ways in which Bangladesh's security institutions used legally ambiguous or affirmatively abusive legislative authorities to kill approximately 1,400 people, conduct systematic enforced disappearances through institutions including the Rapid Action Battalion's Task Force for Interrogation cells, coordinate mass surveillance through the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center, and obstruct accountability through provisions of the Army Act and Criminal Procedure Code that insulate security force personnel from civilian justice.

The interim government that emerged from the revolution responded with unprecedented legislative energy. The President promulgated seventy-eight ordinances across 2025 covering a range of legal domains, including important amendments to the International Crimes Tribunals Act, a replacement of the abusive Cyber Security Act 2023 with a new Cyber Security Ordinance 2025 that, while imperfect, removed some of the most egregious provisions, amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure that introduced new safeguards for arrested persons, and a National Constitutional Council implementation order that, for the first time in Bangladesh's history, placed the constitutional framework for government formation on a negotiated rather than unilaterally imposed basis. Eleven reform commissions, covering the constitution, electoral system, judiciary, public administration, police, and anti-corruption frameworks, submitted recommendations that in many cases represented the most comprehensive analysis of Bangladesh's governance failures ever conducted by official bodies.

The February 2026 elections and the formation of the BNP-led government inherited this reform momentum along with its incompleteness, its internal contradictions, and the powerful institutional resistances that all genuine security sector reform mobilizes. The military's obstruction of disappearances investigations, including documented destruction of evidence at detention sites, demonstrated exactly the pattern of security institution resistance to accountability that the reform agenda will need to overcome. The army's public interventions in election timeline discussions illustrated the persistence of military political engagement that civilian control mechanisms must constrain.

Part Seven examines this legislative architecture comprehensively. It works through the existing legal framework governing Bangladesh's security institutions, identifying its colonial inheritances, its post-independence distortions, and its current inadequacies in the light of both democratic governance standards and Bangladesh's specific strategic requirements. It examines the constitutional provisions that govern the exercise of security power, the emergency powers framework, the military justice system, the intelligence legal framework, and the intersection of security law with fundamental rights. It develops draft legislative proposals addressing the most

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

critical gaps and failures, grounded in the theoretical frameworks of jurisprudence and democratic governance theory that Part One of this textbook established. And it situates Bangladesh's legislative reform agenda within the comparative context of security sector legislation in other transitioning democracies from which Bangladesh can learn, positively and negatively, about what reform approaches work and what approaches fail.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITY GOVERNANCE

1.1 Constitutional Provisions Governing Defense and Security: A Close Reading

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, adopted on 4 November 1972 and subsequently amended on numerous occasions, establishes the fundamental constitutional framework within which all security legislation and policy must operate. Understanding this framework, including both its express provisions and its silences, is the essential starting point for any serious analysis of Bangladesh's legislative architecture for national security.

The most fundamental constitutional provision governing defense is Article 61, which vests the supreme command of the Defence Services in the President. This apparently clear provision is immediately complicated by the constitutional structure of Bangladeshi executive power, in which the President acts on the advice of the Prime Minister in virtually all matters by virtue of Article 48(3). The practical import of this structure is that the supreme command of the armed forces is exercised by the elected civilian executive through the President as formal commander-in-chief, establishing the foundational principle of civilian supremacy that the legislative and institutional framework should embody and enforce.

Article 62 provides that Parliament shall have power to make laws for the raising and maintaining of the Defence Services, for prescribing the conditions of their service, and for regulating the discipline of such services. This provision establishes Parliament's legislative authority over the armed forces as a matter of constitutional command, not mere convention. Yet the legislative reality is that the Army Act of 1952, the Navy Ordinance of 1961, and the Air Force Act of 1953, along with the Army Regulations of 1975, provide the substantive legal framework for the armed forces, and Parliament's actual engagement with these instruments through amendment, oversight, and interrogation has been minimal throughout most of Bangladesh's independent history.

The fundamental rights provisions in Part III of the Constitution, covering Articles 27 through 47A, apply in principle to all actions of the state including actions by the security forces. Article 27 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law. Article 31 guarantees the right to protection of law, prohibiting action detrimental to life, liberty, body, reputation, or property except in accordance with law. Article 32 prohibits deprivation of life or personal liberty except in accordance with law. Article 33 governs the rights of persons arrested or detained, requiring that a person arrested must be informed of the grounds of arrest, must have access to a legal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

practitioner, and must be produced before a magistrate within twenty-four hours. Article 35 prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

These fundamental rights provisions, if given their full constitutional force, would preclude virtually all of the practices that the OHCHR fact-finding report documented as systematic characteristics of Bangladesh's security apparatus under the Hasina government: the secret detention at RAB facilities for extended periods without magistrate production, the torture used as a standard interrogation technique, the extrajudicial killings styled as "crossfire" encounters, and the enforced disappearances that left families without knowledge of their relatives' fate or whereabouts. The gap between constitutional text and institutional practice is one of the most devastating indictments of Bangladesh's security sector governance, and it is a gap that exists not primarily because the constitutional framework is inadequate but because the institutional and legislative mechanisms for enforcing the constitutional framework against security force personnel have been deliberately weakened and routinely circumvented.

Article 47A, inserted by the Fifteenth Amendment, restricted the right to move writs of habeas corpus and other constitutional remedies for persons detained under certain security legislation, creating an explicit constitutional exception to the fundamental rights framework for security detainees. The Constitution Reform Commission established by the interim government recommended in its February 2025 report the deletion of Articles 7A and 7B of the Constitution, which had been inserted by the same amendment to entrench the constitutional provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment against future amendment. These deletions, if implemented through the constitutional reform process launched by the July Charter, would restore a degree of constitutional flexibility to the fundamental rights framework.

1.2 The Emergency Powers Framework: Article 141A and the Security Exception

Article 141A of the Constitution provides the framework for the proclamation of a state of emergency, allowing the President to declare an emergency when the security, economic life, or public order of Bangladesh is threatened by war, external aggression, internal disturbance, or natural calamity. During a state of emergency, Parliament may enact laws inconsistent with certain fundamental rights, and the President may suspend those rights by order.

The emergency powers framework has been invoked repeatedly in Bangladesh's history in ways that have demonstrated both its strategic necessity and its profound vulnerability to abuse. The emergency of January 2007 to December 2008, declared by the military-backed caretaker government during the pre-election crisis, used emergency powers to detain political leaders, suspend constitutional freedoms, and conduct anti-corruption operations outside normal judicial constraints. The constitutional safeguards that are meant to prevent emergency powers from becoming a mechanism for authoritarian governance, including the requirement that emergency proclamations be placed before Parliament and the time limits on emergency duration, have not consistently been observed in Bangladesh's practice.

The Constitution Reform Commission's recommendations on the emergency powers framework addressed some of these vulnerabilities, including proposals for more robust parliamentary

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

oversight of emergency declarations and stricter conditions for their continuation. The July Charter incorporated several of these proposals, though the specific constitutional text implementing them remained to be developed through the post-election constitutional reform process. The new Constitution that the Constitutional Reform Council was mandated to produce within 180 working days of the first session of the February 2026 parliament will need to address the emergency powers framework with sufficient precision to prevent the historical pattern of abuse from recurring.

The European Convention on Human Rights' Article 15 framework, which permits derogation from most Convention rights during a "war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation" but maintains absolute prohibitions on torture, slavery, and retrospective criminal legislation regardless of emergency, provides a useful model for the kind of graduated rights-protection framework that Bangladesh's constitutional revision should adopt. Even during the most severe security emergency, certain rights must remain inviolable: the prohibition on torture, the prohibition on enforced disappearance, the right to habeas corpus in some form, and the right to life itself except as applied in lawful combat operations. These absolute protections would not prevent the security forces from taking necessary security measures, but they would prevent the kind of systematic abuse that the OHCHR documented as characteristic of Bangladesh's security operations under the Hasina government.

1.3 Constitutional Civil-Military Relations: The Gap Between Text and Practice

The constitutional text on civil-military relations, read in conjunction with the broader constitutional framework, establishes a clear hierarchy in which the armed forces are subordinate to the elected civilian government through the President-Prime Minister structure, subject to parliamentary legislation, and bound by the fundamental rights provisions in their operations. This textual clarity has not, as the preceding analysis in Parts Five and Six documented at length, translated into the consistent institutional reality of genuine civilian control.

The Constitution Reform Commission addressed the civil-military relations dimension of the constitutional framework in its February 2025 recommendations. One of the more significant proposals was the inclusion of the chiefs of the defence services in the National Constitutional Council, the proposed body for selecting the Chief Adviser in caretaker periods, alongside the President, Prime Minister, Speaker, and other senior officials. This proposal, which appeared in the July Charter framework, reflected the recognition that the military's effective political power in Bangladesh required formal constitutional acknowledgment and institutionalization within a framework that also constrained it, rather than pretending that purely textual civilian supremacy was sufficient.

The constitutional jurisprudence of civil-military relations in comparative perspective provides important guidance. India's Constitution, which Bangladesh's 1972 document drew on substantially, provides in Article 53 that the executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President and shall be exercised by him directly or through officers subordinate to him. The Supreme Court of India has interpreted this provision to establish that the armed forces are subject to the supreme command of the President and therefore ultimately to the civilian executive, a principle that has been consistently upheld in Indian constitutional jurisprudence

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

even during periods of civil-military tension. Bangladesh's Supreme Court has not developed a comparably clear and consistent body of doctrine on civil-military constitutional relations, and the development of such doctrine, whether through judicial decisions or through explicit constitutional text, is one of the most important items on the constitutional reform agenda.

1.4 The Constitutional Status of Security Forces Other than the Armed Forces

The Bangladesh Constitution does not specifically provide for the Rapid Action Battalion, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, the National Security Intelligence, or the Border Guard Bangladesh. These bodies exist under ordinary legislation and executive order, and their constitutional status is therefore less secure, and in principle more amenable to reform, than the armed forces whose existence is explicitly provided for in constitutional text.

The OHCHR fact-finding report's recommendation that the Rapid Action Battalion be disbanded, and that armed forces personnel be removed from internal security functions except in the most exceptional circumstances, has a constitutional dimension that is important. If military personnel serving in RAB are engaged in law enforcement functions, they are exercising powers that the Constitution contemplates as belonging to the civilian police, and the legal basis for their exercise of those powers and the accountability framework that applies to their exercise requires careful constitutional and statutory grounding. The absence of such grounding has been one of the structural factors enabling the impunity that has characterized RAB operations throughout its history.

The reform proposals that emerged from multiple commissions, international organizations, and political parties in 2025 and 2026 converged on several constitutional and legislative changes in this domain. The OHCHR called for disbanding RAB and returning personnel not involved in serious violations to their home units, restricting the BGB to border security functions, and restricting the DGFI to military intelligence with clearly defined legal authority. The National Citizen Party's manifesto proposed replacing RAB with a gendarmerie-style body within the civilian police framework, with stricter accountability and parliamentary oversight. Human Rights Watch called for ending the arrangement under which military personnel are seconded to RAB, removing the institutional basis for the military's involvement in civilian law enforcement that RAB represented.

These proposals, taken together, represent a constitutional and legislative agenda for clarifying the boundaries between military and civilian security functions that the 1972 Constitution's framers assumed but did not explicitly codify. Making those boundaries explicit in both constitutional text and ordinary legislation is one of the foundational reforms needed to prevent the institutional drift that produced RAB's abusive record.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ARMY ACT AND MILITARY JUSTICE: COLONIAL INHERITANCE AND DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.1 The Army Act of 1952: An Anachronism in Democratic Governance

The Army Act of 1952, which provides the primary statutory framework governing the Bangladesh Army, was enacted as part of the legislative inheritance from the colonial period. It represents a consolidation and amendment of the Indian Army Act of 1911, itself derived from the British Army Act tradition, adapted for the context of the then-Pakistan Army in the years immediately following partition. Bangladesh inherited this legislation at independence in 1971, and while it has been amended on several occasions, its fundamental architecture reflects the governance assumptions of the colonial military establishment rather than the requirements of a democratic state.

The Act's core provisions govern the discipline, administration, and internal justice system of the army, establishing the court martial system as the primary mechanism for adjudicating both military disciplinary offenses and civilian criminal offenses committed by military personnel in the course of their duties. Section 125 of the Act, which grants jurisdiction to courts martial over civil offenses committed by army personnel, combined with the practical effect of Section 197(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which requires government sanction before civilians can bring criminal charges against public officials acting in their official capacity, creates a legal fortress around military personnel that makes civilian accountability for military abuses extraordinarily difficult to achieve.

The court martial system itself, while providing a form of internal justice, falls significantly short of the due process standards that civilian criminal courts are required to observe. The military judge in a court martial is an officer of the same institution whose internal culture and hierarchical authority structures may influence the conduct of proceedings in ways that a genuinely independent judiciary would not permit. The right to legal representation, though formally provided, operates in a context where the accused and their counsel are operating within a military institutional environment rather than before an independent civilian court. The availability of appeal from court martial decisions to civilian courts is limited and procedurally complex.

HRW's January 2025 report specifically identified the Army Act of 1952, the Air Force Act of 1953, and the Navy Ordinance of 1961 as legislative instruments that must be amended to enable prosecution of military personnel for gross human rights violations in civilian courts rather than exclusively through the military justice system. This recommendation reflects a broadly accepted principle in democratic governance: that when security force personnel commit acts that constitute civilian criminal offenses, particularly acts that are gross violations of fundamental rights such as extrajudicial killing, torture, and enforced disappearance, they should be subject to the jurisdiction of the same civilian courts that would handle such acts if committed by anyone else, rather than to an institutional justice system that has structural incentives to protect its members.

2.2 The Court Martial System: Structure, Procedure, and Reform

The court martial system under the Army Act provides for several types of courts martial corresponding to different levels of severity: the General Court Martial for the most serious

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

offenses, which may impose the death penalty or life imprisonment; the District Court Martial for intermediate offenses; and the Summary Court Martial for minor offenses and field discipline. The composition, quorum requirements, and procedural rules for each type of court martial are specified in the Act and in the Army Regulations of 1975.

The procedural framework of the court martial system diverges from civilian criminal procedure in several respects that are relevant to the accountability concerns this Part addresses. The Rules of Evidence applicable in courts martial are less developed than those in civilian courts, creating the possibility that evidence obtained through improper means may be given weight that it would not receive in civilian proceedings. The standard of proof, while nominally the criminal standard of guilt beyond reasonable doubt, operates in an institutional context where the cultural presumption of loyalty and the hierarchical authority of senior officers may influence outcomes in ways that an independent civilian judiciary would not permit. The post-trial confirmation and review process, in which the findings of courts martial are reviewed by senior officers rather than by independent judicial authority, further embeds the risk of institutional rather than independent adjudication.

The Judges Advocate General Branch of the Bangladesh Army, which provides legal advice to military commanders and oversees the court martial system, is a military rather than a civilian institution. Its officers are army officers whose careers are shaped by the same institutional forces and hierarchical loyalties that affect the entire army establishment. While individual JAG officers may and do maintain professional independence, the structural conditions for that independence are weaker than those that apply to the civilian judiciary.

Reform of the court martial system should draw on the comparative experience of other Commonwealth democracies that have modernized their military justice systems while maintaining the essential institutional framework for military discipline. Canada's military justice system, reformed through the National Defence Act amendments of the 1990s and 2000s, introduced a Military Judges system in which judges are appointed to a fixed term, cannot be removed except for cause, and are insulated from the chain of command in ways that provide meaningful judicial independence within the military framework. The United Kingdom's Armed Forces Act 2006 established the Court Martial Appeal Court, which provides civilian judicial review of court martial decisions and aligns the military justice system with the European Convention on Human Rights standards. Australia's Defence Force Discipline Act has been similarly modernized to incorporate the independence and due process standards required by international human rights law.

2.3 The Proposed Amendments to the Army Act: A Legislative Framework

Drawing on the foregoing analysis and on the specific recommendations of the OHCHR, Human Rights Watch, the Constitution Reform Commission, and Bangladesh's own reform commissions, the following legislative proposals for amendment of the Army Act of 1952 address the most critical accountability failures:

First, a new Section 125A should be inserted providing that when a person subject to the Army Act is alleged to have committed any offense that amounts to a gross violation of human rights,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

defined with reference to the standards established in international human rights law and including extrajudicial killing, torture, enforced disappearance, cruel treatment, and sexual violence, such person shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the civilian courts of Bangladesh notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or of any other law. The power of a military tribunal to assert jurisdiction over such matters should be explicitly excluded, and the primacy of civilian court jurisdiction in such cases should be stated without ambiguity.

Second, Section 132 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which requires prior government sanction before criminal complaints can be lodged against certain categories of state official, should be amended to explicitly exclude from its scope any offense constituting a gross human rights violation as defined above. The OHCHR recommendation that Section 197(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code be repealed or substantively amended to remove the barrier to civilian prosecution of police and military officers for abuse of official capacity should be implemented as a matter of legislative priority.

Third, the composition and procedure of General Courts Martial should be reformed to introduce genuinely independent judicial members. At least one member of a General Court Martial should be a serving or retired judge of a civilian court appointed by the Chief Justice of Bangladesh on a rotational basis, sitting alongside military officer members. This civilian judicial presence would not displace the military's institutional disciplinary authority but would introduce an independent perspective on evidentiary and procedural matters that would substantially improve the quality and credibility of courts martial proceedings.

Fourth, the Army Act should be amended to provide an explicit and comprehensive right of appeal from any court martial conviction to the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, with clear procedural rules for the exercise of that right that are accessible to convicted persons who may lack extensive legal resources. The existing appeal mechanism is inadequate in reach and procedural clarity, and its inadequacy has contributed to a culture in which court martial decisions are treated as final even when they reflect the institutional interests of the army establishment rather than independent judicial assessment.

2.4 Military Intelligence Legislation: The DGFI Legal Framework

The Directorate General of Forces Intelligence is Bangladesh's primary military intelligence organization, responsible for counterintelligence, threat assessment, and the protection of military security interests. Its legal framework is, however, remarkably thin by the standards of democratic governance. The DGFI operates under executive directives and military regulations rather than under a comprehensive statutory framework that defines its mandate, its powers, its operational boundaries, and the accountability mechanisms to which it is subject.

This legislative void has been repeatedly identified by human rights organizations, the OHCHR, and Bangladesh's own reform commissions as a critical governance failure. Without a statutory framework, the DGFI's activities are constrained only by the general provisions of the criminal law, the armed forces regulations, and the constitutional fundamental rights provisions that, as previously noted, have not in practice constrained the DGFI's operations in meaningful ways. The OHCHR's February 2025 report specifically found that the DGFI had coordinated with

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

police and RAB in enforced disappearance operations, used intimidation to silence victims' families and lawyers, and obstructed investigations of its detention sites.

The national security intelligence legislation that Bangladesh needs would follow the model of comparable statutes in functioning democracies: a Military Intelligence Act that defines with precision the mandate of the DGFI, limiting it to counterintelligence, force protection intelligence, and strategic military intelligence and explicitly excluding internal political surveillance, support for domestic law enforcement except under strict and judicially supervised conditions, and involvement in any detention or interrogation function outside designated military police facilities that are subject to regular independent inspection.

The parliamentary oversight of the DGFI should be provided through the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense with a security-cleared subcommittee having specific jurisdiction over intelligence matters, access to classified information about DGFI activities under defined handling protocols, and the authority to commission the Inspector General of the Armed Forces to conduct specific investigations on the Committee's behalf. This model, adapted from the intelligence oversight committee structures in Canada, Australia, and Germany, would not require the full public disclosure of intelligence sources and methods but would provide genuine democratic oversight of intelligence activities rather than the current situation in which the DGFI operates in virtually complete institutional darkness.

CHAPTER THREE: THE POLICE AND PARAMILITARY SECURITY FORCES: LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND REFORM

3.1 The Police Act of 1861: A Colonial Law in Democratic Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Police operates under the Police Act of 1861, an instrument of colonial governance designed by the British to maintain order in a subject population rather than to serve and protect a rights-bearing citizenry in a democracy. The Act was enacted in the aftermath of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny to create a centralized, command-oriented police force that was accountable upward to the colonial administration rather than outward to the population it policed. Its governing assumptions, that the primary purpose of the police is to maintain public order for the benefit of the governing authority, that police officers require broad powers of arrest and detention to fulfill this purpose, and that accountability to the courts and to the public is subordinate to operational effectiveness, are precisely the reverse of what a democratic police theory would prescribe.

The Police Act's most consequential legacy is the relationship between the police and political authority. The Act creates a command structure in which the police are directly subordinate to the provincial, now district, administration rather than to an independent police command or to judicial supervision. This structural subordination has enabled the systematic politicization of Bangladesh's police force across every government, making the police an instrument of political

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

control rather than impartial law enforcement. The killing of approximately 1,400 protesters during the July-August 2024 uprising, which the OHCHR characterized as involving "indiscriminate and extensive" use of lethal force by the police and RAB on the direct orders of the political executive, is the most recent and dramatic demonstration of the consequences of this structural vulnerability.

The Bangladesh Police Ordinance of 2007, drafted during the military-backed caretaker period and representing the most serious previous attempt at police reform, has never been enacted into law. Multiple governments have declined to legislate the 2007 Ordinance, reflecting the same political logic that makes police reform difficult everywhere: governing parties prefer a politically subordinate police force over an independent one, even while opposing parties advocate for reform. The UN specifically recommended in its February 2025 report that the Police Act of 1861 be replaced with new legislation based on the 2007 draft, and this recommendation was echoed by the Police Reform Commission established by the interim government, which submitted recommendations in January 2025 for replacing the 1861 Act with a modern Police Service Act.

3.2 The Rapid Action Battalion: Institutional History, Abuses, and the Case for Abolition

The Rapid Action Battalion was established in 2004 under the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government as an elite paramilitary law enforcement unit designed to address serious organized crime and terrorism. It is composed of personnel seconded from the Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, Border Guard Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Police, with the senior leadership positions typically held by army officers. This hybrid composition, combining military personnel with civilian law enforcement powers, has been the primary structural source of RAB's accountability failures.

The pattern of RAB abuses is documented with extraordinary completeness. The OHCHR fact-finding report, the multiple Human Rights Watch investigations, the Amnesty International analyses, and Bangladesh's own Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances have collectively assembled a record that is both quantitatively substantial and qualitatively devastating. The Commission of Inquiry by June 2025 had received over 1,850 complaints about enforced disappearances and found that RAB and associated police units were implicated in approximately 67 percent of documented cases. The RAB-1 Task Force for Interrogation cell in Dhaka, where Kerry Kennedy's team confirmed the site of secret detention operations, represents the physical infrastructure of a system that the evidence now establishes was not the result of rogue officers but of "systematic and organised" institutional practice.

The United States government's December 2021 designation of RAB and six of its current and former senior officials under the Global Magnitsky Act, citing their involvement in extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, represented a severe international accountability measure that affected Bangladesh's defense cooperation with the United States and has not been lifted as of the period of writing. The designation remains relevant to the legislative reform agenda because it demonstrates that the accountability failure of RAB is not merely a domestic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

governance concern but an international security cooperation constraint that directly impairs Bangladesh's strategic relationships.

The question of whether RAB should be reformed or abolished has been one of the more actively debated elements of Bangladesh's security sector reform agenda in 2025 and 2026. The OHCHR and multiple international human rights organizations have called for abolition on the grounds that RAB's institutional culture and track record are beyond remediation through internal reform, and that the structural design of a unit combining military personnel with law enforcement powers is inherently incompatible with democratic accountability. Bangladesh's own Police Reform Commission, while more cautious, called for a thorough re-evaluation of RAB's role, implicitly acknowledging that the current model requires fundamental transformation. The National Citizen Party's election manifesto explicitly proposed abolishing RAB and replacing it with a gendarmerie-style accountable elite unit within the civilian police framework.

The legislative framework for this transformation, whether through abolition and replacement or through radical restructuring, requires several specific elements. The legislation establishing any successor to RAB's counterterrorism and serious organized crime functions must explicitly prohibit the secondment of armed forces personnel to the unit, confining its membership to civilian police personnel. It must establish an independent oversight body with access to the unit's detention facilities, operational records, and complaint resolution processes. It must provide a comprehensive legal basis for the unit's specialized law enforcement powers that is clearly bounded, subject to judicial authorization for the most intrusive measures, and connected to accountability mechanisms that apply the same standards as those governing the civilian courts. And it must establish that any personnel joining the new unit from RAB's existing complement must have undergone a thorough vetting process that excludes those against whom credible allegations of human rights violations exist.

3.3 The Border Guard Bangladesh: Legal Framework and Boundary of Authority

The Border Guard Bangladesh, formerly the Bangladesh Rifles before the 2011 reorganization following the devastating 2009 BDR mutiny, is constitutionally and legally somewhat better positioned than RAB in terms of its functional mandate clarity. The BGB's primary legal authority derives from the Border Guard Bangladesh Act 2010, enacted specifically to replace the Bangladesh Rifles Order following the mutiny, and from the Border Guard Bangladesh Regulations made thereunder. This relatively recent legislative framework gives the BGB a somewhat more clearly defined mandate than the colonial-era instruments governing other security institutions.

The BGB's mandate under the 2010 Act encompasses border guarding, prevention of smuggling and transborder crime, collection of intelligence along the border, and assistance to civil authorities when requested. The OHCHR recommended restricting the BGB specifically to border security functions, noting that its deployment for internal security purposes, as occurred during the July 2024 uprising, constituted a misuse of its mandate that contributed to the pattern of disproportionate force against protesters.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The 2009 BDR mutiny, in which 74 Bangladesh Army officers and civilians were killed during a pay and welfare dispute at the BDR headquarters in Dhaka, remains one of the most traumatic institutional events in the history of the Bangladesh security establishment. The subsequent trial of thousands of BDR personnel, conducted both through military courts and through a specially constituted civilian tribunal, resulted in hundreds of convictions and death sentences in proceedings that drew criticism from international observers for failing to meet due process standards. The reformulation as Border Guard Bangladesh in 2010, with army officers continuing to fill leadership positions over BDR-origin other ranks, addressed some of the immediate causes of the 2009 tension but created new institutional grievances that continue to affect BGB morale and institutional culture.

3.4 The Special Powers Act: A Weapon Against Dissent

The Special Powers Act of 1974, originally enacted by the Mujibur Rahman government to address extraordinary threats in the immediate post-liberation period, has become one of the most persistently abused instruments of security legislation in Bangladesh's history. The Act allows preventive detention without trial for periods that can in practice be extended indefinitely through successive orders, circumventing the fundamental rights protections of the Constitution in ways that have repeatedly been used to detain political opponents, journalists, activists, and others whose suppression serves the interests of whoever governs at a given moment.

The Act's preventive detention provisions enable the detention of any person where the government is "satisfied" that such detention is necessary to prevent the person from acting in a manner prejudicial to public safety, public order, or the security of Bangladesh. The judicial review available against preventive detention orders is limited to procedural challenge rather than substantive review of the necessity or proportionality of the detention. The Advisory Committee that nominally provides a check on preventive detention has in practice been inadequate as an accountability mechanism.

Multiple reform recommendations have called for the repeal of the Special Powers Act, including from the international human rights organizations, Bangladesh's own Law Commission, and the reform commissions established by the interim government. International human rights bodies have consistently identified the Act as incompatible with Bangladesh's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh ratified in 2000 and which establishes in Article 9 the right to liberty and security and prohibits arbitrary detention in terms that the Special Powers Act systematically violates.

The legislative replacement for the Special Powers Act's preventive detention function, to the extent that such a function is genuinely necessary for security purposes, should follow the model of time-limited detention with robust judicial oversight that characterizes comparable provisions in functioning democracies. Any preventive detention should require a judicial order, granted on the basis of specific and documented security grounds, initially for a maximum period of perhaps forty-eight hours or seventy-two hours, renewable through successive judicial orders each of which requires fresh grounds and each of which is subject to habeas corpus challenge. No detention should be permitted to extend beyond a defined outer limit, say ninety days total,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

without the institution of formal criminal charges that must be tried within a further defined period.

CHAPTER FOUR: INTELLIGENCE LEGISLATION AND THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SURVEILLANCE

4.1 The National Security Intelligence: Legal Framework Gaps

The National Security Intelligence, Bangladesh's primary civilian intelligence agency, operates under a legal framework that is, like the DGFI, more notable for its gaps than for its content. The NSI derives its existence from executive orders and regulations rather than from comprehensive parliamentary legislation, a constitutional and democratic accountability deficit that mirrors the DGFI's situation and creates similar structural opportunities for abuse.

The August 2025 investigation by the Daily Star documenting the surveillance infrastructure constructed by the Hasina government illustrated the scale of the accountability failure that this legislative gap enables. Between 2016 and 2024, the National Telecommunication Monitoring Center, RAB, and various police units collectively purchased surveillance equipment worth approximately 1,382 crore taka, comprising IMSI catchers, GPS trackers, signal jammers, speaker recognition systems, and tools for intercepting encrypted communications and injecting spyware. This infrastructure, built in the absence of any legal framework governing what intelligence agencies may collect, from whom, under what authorization, and subject to what oversight, represents a comprehensive surveillance state constructed without legal foundation.

The Cyber Security Ordinance 2025, which replaced the abusive Cyber Security Act 2023, maintained the institutional framework of the National Cyber Security Agency and National Cyber Security Council while removing some of the most egregious content-policing provisions of the previous legislation. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation Act amendment being developed in 2025, the BTRA, attempted to introduce standards on lawful interception consistent with international norms, but civil society organizations and human rights groups criticized the draft for maintaining overly broad grounds for surveillance authorization and for failing to provide adequate judicial oversight or independent review mechanisms.

4.2 The Necessary Elements of an Intelligence Legal Framework

Drawing on the comparative experience of intelligence legislation in functioning democracies including the United Kingdom's Investigatory Powers Act 2016, Canada's Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, Germany's BND-Gesetz, and Australia's Intelligence Services Act 2001, the legislative framework that Bangladesh needs for its intelligence agencies would incorporate several essential elements.

The foundational element is a National Intelligence Act or Intelligence Services Act that gives each of Bangladesh's intelligence agencies, the NSI, the DGFI, and any other entity conducting

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

intelligence collection activities, a clear statutory mandate defining the purposes for which intelligence may be collected, the legal authorities under which collection may proceed, and the accountability mechanisms to which the agencies are subject. Each intelligence function, counterintelligence, foreign intelligence, domestic security intelligence, and signals intelligence, should be provided with a separately defined and bounded legal authority rather than permitted under the general proposition that national security justifies whatever the executive decides to authorize.

The second essential element is a warrant requirement for the most intrusive surveillance measures. The interception of communications, the covert access to electronic devices, the physical surveillance of individual persons, and the access to third-party held data about specific individuals should all require a warrant from an independent judicial authority before being conducted, except in genuine emergencies where a warrant can be obtained within a short defined period after the urgent action is taken. The warrant requirement is the most important single safeguard against the systematic abuse of surveillance authority, because it interposes an independent institutional judgment between the intelligence agency's desire to collect and the individual's right to privacy.

The third element is an independent oversight mechanism. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament model used in the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Control Council model used in Germany, and the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians model used in Canada all provide versions of parliamentary oversight of intelligence with access to classified information under security protocols. Combining parliamentary oversight with an independent Inspector General of Intelligence and Security, who has access to all intelligence agency records and can conduct investigations on the Inspector General's own initiative or on parliamentary referral, provides complementary oversight mechanisms that reinforce each other.

The fourth element is a complaints mechanism for individuals who believe they have been subjected to unlawful surveillance, operating through a statutory Tribunal that can access classified material and provide a form of judicial review without requiring public disclosure of intelligence sources and methods. The United Kingdom's Investigatory Powers Tribunal provides the functional model, though it has been criticized for excessive deference to executive claims that particular activities are necessary for national security and for the limitation that complainants cannot be told whether they were subjects of surveillance even when the Tribunal has found in their favor.

4.3 The Cyber Security Legislative Framework: Between Protection and Repression

The cyber security legislative framework is one of the most contested domains of Bangladesh's security law, because the same legislation that must protect critical infrastructure and citizens from cybercrime and foreign cyber attacks has consistently been used under previous legislative incarnations to suppress political dissent, intimidate journalists, and silence critics of the government.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The trajectory of this legislation illustrates the legislative reform challenge with particular clarity. The Information and Communication Technology Act 2006, originally enacted to regulate electronic commerce, was amended in 2013 to include criminal provisions targeting online content, including Section 57 which became notorious for its use against journalists, bloggers, and political critics under the Hasina government. The Digital Security Act 2018 replaced the ICT Act provisions with an even more comprehensive set of content-related criminal offenses that were widely condemned by press freedom and human rights organizations as incompatible with freedom of expression. The Cyber Security Act 2023 replaced the DSA following domestic and international pressure but, as critics immediately noted, replicated many of its essential features while providing cosmetic modifications.

The Cyber Security Ordinance 2025, promulgated by the interim government, represented the most significant departure yet from the previous pattern, removing the contentious Section 42 arrest-without-warrant power and narrowing some of the most overbroad content offense definitions. But civil society organizations and international human rights groups noted that the new Ordinance still contained provisions with definitions vague enough to enable abuse, maintained governmental powers over digital content removal without adequate judicial oversight, and failed to address the structural surveillance infrastructure that the previous government had built and that remained in place.

The jurisprudential principle that should govern cyber security legislation in a democratic state is the principle of technological neutrality: the same freedoms that citizens enjoy in the physical world, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and the right to privacy, apply equally in the digital world, and restrictions on those freedoms in the digital domain require the same justification, proportionality, and legal basis as comparable restrictions in the physical domain would require. This principle, articulated in the United Nations Human Rights Council's 2016 and 2018 resolutions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the digital age, provides the normative framework within which Bangladesh's cyber security legislation should be developed.

4.4 The Official Secrets Act: Colonial Secrecy and Democratic Transparency

The Official Secrets Act 1923, another colonial inheritance that Bangladesh has retained despite its fundamental incompatibility with democratic governance norms, provides sweeping criminal penalties for the unauthorized disclosure of any information that could be useful to an enemy of the state, defined in terms so broad that they potentially encompass almost any sensitive government information. Section 3 of the Act, which covers espionage and the unauthorized obtaining, collecting, recording, or communication of information whose disclosure would or might be prejudicial to the safety or interests of the state, is drafted in terms that would enable its application to journalists, whistleblowers, and academic researchers as readily as to actual spies.

The tension between the Official Secrets Act and the Right to Information Act 2009 illustrates the incoherence of Bangladesh's current information law framework. The RTI Act's preamble explicitly recognizes the right to information as an integral part of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, and Section 3 of the RTI Act states that all other laws shall be superseded or overridden by the RTI Act. But the practical application of this supremacy clause

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

in the context of national security information is unclear, and the Official Secrets Act remains on the statute books as a tool that governments can deploy against disclosures they wish to suppress under a national security framing.

A reformed Official Secrets Act or National Security Information Act should narrow the definition of protectable national security information to categories where disclosure would create specific, identifiable, and serious harm: information that would reveal intelligence sources and methods, information about operational military plans, information about cryptographic capabilities, and information about specific individuals that would endanger their lives. Everything else should be presumptively subject to the RTI framework, with the burden on the government to demonstrate within a specific category of harm why disclosure should be withheld. The whistleblower protection framework established in the 2011 Public Interest Information Disclosure Act should be strengthened to ensure that disclosure of government wrongdoing is protected even where it involves information that the government would prefer to classify as sensitive.

CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGENCY LAWS, INTERNAL SECURITY LEGISLATION, AND THE RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

5.1 The Special Powers Act and the Preventive Detention Framework

The preceding section introduced the Special Powers Act as a mechanism for preventive detention that has been systematically abused throughout Bangladesh's independent history. This section develops the legislative reform framework in greater detail, examining the constitutional and international law dimensions of preventive detention and proposing the specific legislative architecture for a reformed preventive security detention framework.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bangladesh has been a party since 2000, provides in Article 9(1) that everyone has the right to liberty and security of person, and that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. The Human Rights Committee's General Comment 35 on Article 9, adopted in 2014, clarifies that the prohibition on arbitrary detention applies to all deprivations of liberty, including preventive detention, and that preventive detention is arbitrary unless justified by specific and individualized circumstances and subject to judicial review. General Comment 35 specifically identifies indefinitely renewable preventive detention orders as incompatible with Article 9 and notes that preventive detention for national security purposes must be subject to the same proportionality and necessity standards as detention in criminal proceedings.

Bangladesh's obligation under the ICCPR, read together with the constitutional right to protection of law in Article 31 and the right to life and personal liberty in Article 32, requires a preventive detention framework that meets several specific standards. Detention must be authorized by a competent, independent, and impartial authority, which in democratic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

governance means a judicial authority rather than an executive minister. The grounds for detention must be sufficiently specific that the detainee can effectively challenge them before a reviewing tribunal. The duration of detention must be strictly limited, with regular judicial review at defined intervals. The detainee must have access to legal representation from the moment of detention. And habeas corpus review before a court of law must be available as an absolute right that cannot be suspended even during declared emergencies.

These requirements are not incompatible with effective security detention in genuine cases where a specific individual poses a documented and specific threat to public safety or national security. They are incompatible only with the use of detention as a tool of political repression against dissidents, journalists, and critics who pose no genuine security threat. This is precisely the use that the Special Powers Act has repeatedly been put to, and precisely the use that a reformed framework must be designed to preclude.

5.2 Aid to Civil Power: The Legal Framework for Military Internal Deployment

The deployment of the armed forces for internal security purposes, sometimes described as aid to civil power or aid to civil administration, is one of the most legally sensitive exercises of state power in any democratic system, because it brings the organized violence capacity of the military to bear against the state's own citizens in situations that may or may not rise to the level of the extraordinary threats that such deployment is meant to address.

Bangladesh's current legal framework for military internal deployment is inadequate in both precision and democratic accountability. The armed forces are constitutionally described as available for aid to civil administration, and the Army Act provides general authority for the deployment of military forces in internal security situations, but the specific legal conditions for such deployment, the authorities required to authorize it, the duration limits that apply, the rules of engagement that govern the use of force, the accountability for actions taken during deployment, and the mechanisms for terminating the deployment are not clearly specified in any single comprehensive legislative instrument.

The OHCHR's recommendation that an ordinance be enacted to ensure that armed forces can only be deployed for internal security tasks in the most exceptional circumstances and for a limited duration, and that such deployment should be subject to parliamentary approval and operate under the command of civilian law enforcement authorities, provides the outline of the legislative framework needed. The specific legislative architecture for this framework would include a National Internal Security Act or an amendment to the Armed Forces Act that defines the legal threshold for armed forces internal deployment, requiring certification by the civilian government, supported by specific documented grounds, that ordinary police forces are wholly incapable of maintaining public order and that a defined emergency exists justifying military assistance.

Parliamentary authorization for internal military deployment beyond an initial emergency period of perhaps forty-eight to seventy-two hours should be required, with parliamentary approval renewable in defined intervals and subject to debate on the floor of the National Assembly rather than to the discretion of the executive alone. Rules of engagement governing the use of force

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

during internal deployment must be publicly available in their general principles, submitted to parliamentary oversight, and specifically prohibiting the use of lethal force against unarmed protesters regardless of executive instruction. Accountability for actions taken during internal deployment must be the same as that for actions taken in any other context, with civilian judicial jurisdiction over human rights violations committed by military personnel during internal deployment regardless of any provision of military law.

The comparative models for this framework include the United Kingdom's Civil Contingencies Act 2004, which provides a carefully structured framework for emergency powers that maintains parliamentary oversight and judicial review, and the Canada Emergencies Act 1988, which replaced the War Measures Act and specifically requires parliamentary confirmation of emergency declarations within defined time limits. The South African National Key Points Act, as reformed after the apartheid era, demonstrates the possibility of building security protection frameworks that serve genuine security needs without creating the tools of repression that characterized the apartheid security legislation. These comparative models, applied with due sensitivity to Bangladesh's specific constitutional context and security requirements, provide the legislative engineering guidance for building a framework that is simultaneously operationally effective and democratically accountable.

5.3 The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 and Its Reform

The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 provides the primary legislative framework for counterterrorism in Bangladesh, criminalizing the commission or financing of terrorist acts, membership in proscribed organizations, and a range of related conduct. The Act has been amended on several occasions since 2009, including amendments in 2012 and 2013 that expanded its scope to cover cybercrime-related terrorism and to modify the proscription regime.

The Act's definition of terrorism has been a subject of sustained criticism from human rights organizations, who have noted that the definition is broad enough to encompass activities that in a democratic state should be protected political expression rather than terrorism. Section 2(1)(tha) of the Act defines terrorist acts to include, inter alia, acts calculated to compel the government to do or abstain from doing any act, a formulation that could in principle cover peaceful protest, civil disobedience, or political advocacy that aims to influence government policy. The proscription regime, under which organizations can be banned by executive order, has been criticized for the inadequacy of the procedural safeguards against erroneous or politically motivated proscriptions.

The reform of the Anti-Terrorism Act should be guided by the principle that counterterrorism legislation in a democracy must be both effective against genuine terrorist threats and bounded by the rule of law principles that distinguish democracy from the authoritarianism that terrorism itself aims to impose. This principle, articulated in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, requires that terrorist offense definitions be specific and precise, that criminal liability be established only for conduct that the state can demonstrate involves actual violence or the direct facilitation of violence, and that counterterrorism powers be

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

subject to the same judicial oversight and proportionality requirements that govern all other state coercive powers.

Specific reforms to the Anti-Terrorism Act should include narrowing the definition of terrorist acts to focus on actual or threatened violence against persons or critical infrastructure, removing from the definition any reference to causing the government to act or abstain from acting that could encompass political advocacy, strengthening the procedural requirements for organization proscription to include notice, opportunity to respond, and prompt judicial review, establishing time limits on special counterterrorism detention powers, and creating a comprehensive review mechanism under which proscription orders and other counterterrorism measures are periodically reviewed for continued necessity and proportionality.

CHAPTER SIX: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR PROCUREMENT ACCOUNTABILITY AND FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

6.1 The Public Procurement Act 2006 and Defense Procurement Exemptions

The Public Procurement Act 2006 provides the general legislative framework governing government procurement in Bangladesh, establishing competitive tendering requirements, evaluation criteria, procurement methods, and accountability mechanisms that are meant to ensure transparency, fairness, and value for money in government purchasing. The Act applies to all government ministries and departments, including the Ministry of Defense, but contains explicit provisions through which defense and security-sensitive procurement can be exempted from the competitive tendering and transparency requirements that apply to ordinary public procurement.

Section 32 of the Public Procurement Act provides that the Act shall not apply to procurement of goods, services, or works if the Cabinet determines that the public interest in security or national defense requires exemption. This provision is broadly drafted and has been applied to exempt major defense procurement decisions from competitive tendering, independent evaluation, and public disclosure in ways that have created the conditions for the procurement corruption that has been documented in earlier parts of this textbook. The consequence of this exemption is a defense procurement environment where the standard safeguards against overpaying, accepting substandard equipment, and distributing contracts on the basis of kickbacks and political relationships rather than technical merit are entirely removed.

The legislative framework needed is not the elimination of security-sensitive procurement exemptions, which are genuinely necessary in some contexts, but the replacement of the blanket exemption with a carefully calibrated framework that maintains security confidentiality for information that genuinely requires it while establishing robust accountability mechanisms for the procurement process itself. Procurement decisions can be confidential in their operational specifics while the process by which those decisions are made remains subject to oversight. The

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

existence of a competitive evaluation, the range of options considered, the general criteria applied, and the process of final decision-making can all be overseen by a parliamentary committee with appropriate security clearances without publicly disclosing the specific technical capabilities acquired or the pricing arrangements that might give adversaries commercially useful information.

6.2 Draft Provisions for a Defense Procurement Accountability Act

The following legislative architecture, presented as draft framework provisions for a Defense Procurement Accountability Act, addresses the specific accountability failures identified in Part Five of this textbook and responds to the recommendations of the reform commissions and international organizations that have examined Bangladesh's defense procurement governance.

Part I of the proposed Act would establish the Defense Procurement Review Authority as an independent statutory body reporting to Parliament rather than to the Ministry of Defense or the Armed Forces Division. The Review Authority would have jurisdiction to examine all defense procurement decisions above a defined threshold value, currently recommended at fifty crore taka, and to audit any procurement regardless of value on the basis of specific complaint or systemic concern. It would have full access to all procurement-related records, including classified records reviewed under appropriate security protocols, the power to summon witnesses and compel document production, and the authority to refer evidence of procurement irregularity to the Anti-Corruption Commission for criminal investigation.

Part II would establish the procedures for major defense procurement decisions, requiring that all procurements above five hundred crore taka be preceded by a documented capability assessment, a market survey identifying at least three potential suppliers in competitive categories, a comparative technical evaluation conducted by a panel including at least two civilian technical experts appointed by the Review Authority, a value-for-money assessment, and a financial risk assessment covering lifecycle costs including maintenance, upgrades, and training. The specific technical and price details of bids received would be protected as confidential, but the existence of the evaluation process, the criteria applied, and the general basis of the decision would be disclosed to the parliamentary committee with jurisdiction over defense procurement.

Part III would establish the post-delivery performance audit requirement, under which all major defense procurement contracts would be subject to independent technical audit within two years of delivery of the contracted systems, with the audit report filed with the Review Authority and a classified version provided to the parliamentary defense oversight committee. The audit would assess whether the equipment delivered meets the performance specifications in the contract, whether the delivery timeline was met, whether training and support obligations were fulfilled, and whether the total cost incurred corresponds to the contracted price. Systematic departure from contracted specifications or costs would be reported to the public accounts process and to the Review Authority for investigation.

Part IV would establish the conflict of interest framework for defense procurement officials, requiring disclosure of financial interests and personal relationships with suppliers, establishing cooling-off periods before which procurement officials may accept employment with defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

contractors, and creating criminal penalties for non-disclosure that are proportionate to the scale of the procurement involved. The comparable provisions in Australia's Defence Procurement Framework, the United States Department of Defense procurement ethics regulations, and the United Kingdom's Defence and Security Procurement framework provide the international best practice reference points from which this Part would be drafted.

6.3 Parliamentary Budget Scrutiny: The Appropriations Framework for Defense

The annual defense appropriations process provides one of the most important mechanisms for democratic accountability over defense spending, because it is the mechanism through which Parliament formally authorizes the resources that make defense activity possible. If parliamentary appropriations scrutiny is genuine and substantive, it provides a regular opportunity for democratic deliberation about defense priorities, a public forum in which the government must justify its defense expenditure proposals, and a lever through which Parliament can express its preferences about the direction of defense policy.

Bangladesh's current appropriations process for defense is inadequate in several respects that have been consistent features of the system across multiple governments. The defense budget is presented to Parliament in aggregate form that provides minimal information about the specific activities and investments the allocation is intended to fund. The parliamentary debate on the defense budget is cursory relative to the scale of the allocation, in part because members of parliament lack access to the detailed information that would enable substantive engagement. The Public Accounts Committee's review of defense expenditure after the fact is limited by the same information constraints. And the connection between the formal budget process and the actual resource flows to the defense establishment, including the off-budget financing arrangements and military enterprise revenues analyzed in Part Five, is not captured in the formal appropriations framework at all.

A comprehensive reform of the defense appropriations framework would require several legislative changes. An amendment to the Appropriations Act framework would require the government to present to Parliament, alongside the defense budget proposal, a Defense Program Statement that describes in summary form the specific programs and activities funded by the proposed allocation, the strategic objectives each program serves, the performance indicators by which program success will be measured, and the connection between this year's allocation and the previous year's results as measured against those indicators. This program-based budget presentation, adapted from the system used in Australia, Canada, and Germany, gives Parliament substantive information on which to base meaningful scrutiny without disclosing operationally sensitive details.

An amendment to the Public Finance Management Act would require that the defense minister present an annual classified defense finance report to the parliamentary defense committee within ninety days of the end of each financial year, disclosing the actual expenditure against appropriations across all budget lines, all off-budget financing commitments entered into during the year with their principal amounts and interest rates, all government-to-government defense loan agreements and their current status, and the revenues and expenditures of all defense-affiliated commercial enterprises. The committee would then present a sanitized version of this

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

report to the full Parliament, omitting operationally sensitive details but providing the substantive financial transparency that democratic accountability requires.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL: JURISDICTION, PROCESS, AND REFORM

7.1 The ICT in Historical and Contemporary Context

The International Crimes Tribunal, established under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973, has had one of the more contested histories of any legal institution in Bangladesh. Originally created to prosecute war crimes committed during the 1971 Liberation War, the Tribunal was dormant for decades before being revived by the Hasina government in 2010. The trials conducted between 2010 and 2024, while addressing genuine crimes that had long demanded accountability, were extensively criticized by international legal observers for procedural irregularities including limitations on defense access to evidence, ex parte communications between tribunal members and prosecutors, and a pace of proceedings that raised questions about whether due process standards were being met.

The interim government's amendments to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act in 2025, including three successive ordinance-based amendments, made several improvements to the ICT framework while retaining significant concerns. The amendments addressed some procedural issues related to defense rights and evidence management. The extension of the ICT's jurisdiction to cover the killings of protesters during the July-August 2024 uprising, most significantly the charges against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for crimes against humanity, represented a significant expansion of the Tribunal's role from historical war crimes prosecutions to accountability for recent events.

The in-absentia trial and November 2025 death sentence against Hasina for crimes against humanity related to the killing of protesters raised both procedural and substantive legal questions that an internationally credible accountability framework must address. In-absentia trials for serious crimes have been permitted under some international criminal law frameworks, including those of the International Criminal Court in limited circumstances and in some domestic legal systems, but they require additional procedural safeguards to ensure that the fundamental right to be present at one's trial is accommodated to the maximum extent possible. The ICT's procedures for in-absentia trials must comply with the ICCPR standards for fair trial including the right to be present, the right to legal representation of one's choosing, and the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense.

7.2 The Death Penalty and Bangladesh's International Legal Obligations

The retention of the death penalty in the ICT's jurisdiction, and Bangladesh's broader maintenance of capital punishment for a range of offenses, creates tension with the direction of international human rights law and with Bangladesh's obligations under the ICCPR's Second

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Optional Protocol abolishing the death penalty, which Bangladesh has not ratified. Multiple international human rights organizations, including six international rights groups in an October 2025 letter to the Chief Adviser, called for a moratorium on the death penalty and for the ICT to be reformed to preclude capital punishment as a sentencing option.

The jurisprudential debate about capital punishment has been conducted at the highest levels of international legal thought for many decades and has not been resolved to universal satisfaction. The retentionist argument holds that capital punishment for the most heinous offenses including genocide, crimes against humanity, and the systematic murder of civilian protesters is both constitutionally permissible in states that retain it and morally defensible as the only proportionate response to acts of extraordinary evil. The abolitionist argument holds that the irreversibility of execution in a system of criminal justice that is fallible creates an unacceptable risk of executing the innocent, that the deterrent effect of capital punishment is not established empirically, and that the evolving standards of international human rights law increasingly treat the death penalty as incompatible with the fundamental right to life.

Bangladesh's continued use of capital punishment, both generally and specifically in the ICT context, places it at odds with a significant trend in international human rights law toward abolition, though it remains within the range of positions legally permitted under the ICCPR as currently ratified by Bangladesh given the absence of Second Optional Protocol ratification. The political feasibility of abolishing capital punishment in Bangladesh's current political environment is limited, but the institution of a formal moratorium on executions, combined with commutation of existing death sentences to life imprisonment, would substantially reduce the international human rights law concerns while stopping short of the legislative abolition that would face significant domestic political resistance.

7.3 The ICT and Military Accountability: The October 2025 Arrest Warrants

The International Crimes Tribunal's October 2025 issuance of arrest warrants against sixteen army officers for criminal charges of enforced disappearance represented one of the most significant legal challenges to military institutional impunity in Bangladesh's history. The army's immediate response, releasing a statement disclosing that the indicted officials had been taken into military custody, reflected both the army's recognition that the charges could not be ignored and its institutional preference for handling the matter within the military framework rather than before the civilian court.

The legal question of whether military officers charged with crimes against humanity and enforced disappearances by a civilian tribunal should be processed through military custody and court martial proceedings or should be immediately transferred to civilian custody and tried before the civilian ICT is one that goes to the heart of the military accountability reforms analyzed throughout this Part. The existing legal framework, particularly the Army Act provisions granting courts martial jurisdiction over civil offenses committed by military personnel, creates the legal basis for the military's insistence on handling the matter internally. The reforms proposed in Chapter Two of this Part, specifically the proposed Section 125A establishing civilian court primacy for gross human rights violations, would resolve this ambiguity definitively in favor of civilian jurisdiction.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The broader significance of the ICT's action against military officers extends beyond the specific legal proceeding. It signals, for the first time in Bangladesh's history, that the institutional impunity that military officers have historically enjoyed for human rights violations committed in the course of security operations is not constitutionally guaranteed and may be penetrated by civilian justice mechanisms when the political conditions allow it. Whether this signal is translated into a durable institutional change or proves to be a temporary feature of a particular political moment depends on whether the legislative reforms necessary to make civilian accountability routine rather than exceptional are enacted and enforced.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DRAFT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR A NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY ACT

8.1 The Case for a Consolidated National Security Legal Framework

The preceding chapters have analyzed Bangladesh's existing security legislation sector by sector, identifying in each domain the specific failures and the specific reforms needed. Taken together, these analyses point toward a need that goes beyond sector-specific legislative amendments: Bangladesh needs a consolidated National Defense and Security Act that provides a single, coherent legislative framework for the governance of the security establishment, replacing the patchwork of colonial-era statutes, post-independence amendments, executive orders, and institutional regulations that currently provides an incoherent and inadequate legal foundation.

The comprehensive codification approach has been successfully used in other Commonwealth democracies that have undertaken major security sector reform. Australia's consolidation of its national security legislation through a series of major reform exercises from the 1990s through the 2010s, Canada's National Security Act reform process, and South Africa's post-apartheid defense legislation provide models of comprehensive rather than piecemeal legislative approaches to security law reform. The advantage of comprehensive codification is that it forces a systematic examination of the entire legislative framework, exposing inconsistencies and gaps that piecemeal amendment misses, and it provides a clear and accessible statement of the law for all stakeholders including citizens, security force personnel, oversight bodies, and the international community.

8.2 Draft Framework: The National Defense and Security Act 2026 or 2027

The following provisions represent the key structural elements of a comprehensive National Defense and Security Act, offered as a draft legislative framework for national deliberation rather than a final text. The drafting follows the form of contemporary Commonwealth legislative practice, with section headings indicating the subject matter and substantive provisions drafted in plain language accessible to the non-specialist reader.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part I would establish Definitions and Principles. Section 1 would define the National Defense and Security Act's scope as covering all matters relating to the establishment, governance, employment, accountability, and oversight of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, the intelligence and security services of Bangladesh, the paramilitary forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs, and related institutions. Section 2 would state the Governing Principles of the Act: that all defense and security activities shall be conducted in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Bangladesh; that the fundamental rights of all persons, whether citizens or others, shall be respected in all security operations; that the armed forces and security services are subordinate to the elected civilian government; that democratic accountability for defense and security activities shall be maintained through parliamentary oversight, judicial review, and public transparency consistent with genuine security requirements.

Part II would establish the Command and Oversight Architecture. Section 10 would affirm the supreme command of the Defence Services in the President acting on the advice of the Prime Minister. Section 11 would establish the National Security Council as a statutory body chaired by the Prime Minister and including the President, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers of Defense and Home Affairs, Foreign Minister, Chief of Defence Staff, and the heads of the intelligence services, as the principal mechanism for coordinating security policy across government. Section 12 would establish the Ministry of Defense's authority over the Armed Forces Division, specifying that the Secretary of Defense as the principal civilian official of the Ministry has the right of access to all Armed Forces Division records and the right to attend all Armed Forces Division meetings, and that the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division reports to both the Chief Advisers and the Ministry of Defense. Section 13 would establish the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense with statutory powers including the right to compel document production, the right to receive classified briefings under defined security protocols, the obligation of the government to respond formally to committee reports within ninety days, and the entitlement to professional staff including cleared analysts with defense and security expertise.

Part III would govern the Armed Forces, replacing and modernizing the Army Act 1952, Navy Ordinance 1961, and Air Force Act 1953. Section 20 would establish the Bangladesh Armed Forces as comprising the army, navy, and air force, and provide for the appointment and terms of service of their respective chiefs. Section 21 would establish the Military Justice System, providing for courts martial as the primary mechanism for military discipline matters while explicitly excluding courts martial jurisdiction over gross human rights violations defined in Section 21(8) as encompassing extrajudicial killing, torture, enforced disappearance, cruel treatment, and sexual violence, all of which shall be triable exclusively before civilian courts. Section 22 would govern the internal deployment of the armed forces, requiring Prime Ministerial certification supported by specific documented grounds, parliamentary authorization for deployment beyond seventy-two hours, and rules of engagement prohibiting lethal force against unarmed persons that shall be publicly available in their general principles.

Part IV would govern the Intelligence and Security Services, establishing a statutory mandate for the National Security Intelligence and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, defining their respective jurisdictions, powers, and accountability mechanisms as analyzed in Chapter Four above. The warrant requirement for intrusive surveillance measures, the independent

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

oversight mechanism, and the individual complaints process would all be established in this Part. The National Security Agency framework for cyber and signals intelligence would be given explicit statutory foundation with the same oversight architecture.

Part V would govern Internal Security and Paramilitary Forces, establishing the legal framework for the Border Guard Bangladesh, a reformed successor to the Rapid Action Battalion, and the Ansar-VDP. The BGB's mandate would be limited to border security functions with specific authorization requirements for any deployment beyond the border zone. The RAB successor force would be established as a civilian police unit with no military personnel, subject to an independent oversight committee with access to detention facilities, and governed by rules of engagement that comply with international law enforcement standards.

Part VI would establish the Accountability Framework, incorporating the Defense Procurement Review Authority, the Inspector General of the Armed Forces, the parliamentary appropriations framework, the defense finance reporting requirements, and the complaint and investigation mechanisms analyzed across the preceding chapters. This Part would explicitly state that no provision of the Act or of any other law shall be read as restricting the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts over any matter concerning the conduct of the security forces, and that the duty of the security forces to cooperate with investigations by the Commission of Inquiry, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and any other authorized investigative body is unconditional and cannot be waived by reference to military confidentiality or operational sensitivity.

Part VII would establish Transitional Provisions, specifying the timeline and mechanism for the repeal of existing legislation replaced by the Act including the Army Act 1952, Navy Ordinance 1961, Air Force Act 1953, Special Powers Act 1974, and the relevant provisions of the Official Secrets Act 1923. Transitional provisions would ensure continuity of service for armed forces personnel, the validity of existing contracts and agreements, and the continuation of ongoing prosecutions and investigations under the applicable provisions of the replaced legislation.

8.3 The Jurisprudential Foundation: Legislative Theory and Security Law

The comprehensive legislative framework proposed above requires grounding in a jurisprudential theory that explains why these specific design choices are appropriate for the specific context of Bangladesh's democratic development and security requirements. The jurisprudential tradition most directly relevant is the tradition of constitutional liberalism that runs from John Locke's theory of government by consent through Kant's categorical imperative and its implications for law, through the Dworkinian tradition of rights as trumps against majoritarian action, and into the contemporary human rights law jurisprudence of the international treaty bodies.

In this tradition, the fundamental normative constraint on security legislation is the principle that the state's power to coerce, including its power to arrest, detain, surveil, and deploy force, is legitimate only to the extent that it is authorized by law that is itself consistent with the fundamental rights of the persons subjected to that coercion. This is the principle of rule of law in its most demanding formulation: not merely that government action must have some legal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

basis, but that the legal basis must be substantively adequate to justify the interference with rights that the action involves.

Applied to Bangladesh's security legislation, this principle explains why the patchwork of colonial-era statutes, executive orders, and institutional regulations that currently provides the legal basis for security operations is inadequate: it provides legal form without constitutional substance, authorization without justification, and institutional authority without democratic accountability. The National Defense and Security Act framework proposed in this chapter is designed precisely to replace this inadequate foundation with a legislative architecture that is both formally and substantively consistent with the constitutional framework and the international law obligations within which Bangladesh's security activities must operate.

The Dworkinian dimension of this jurisprudential framework is particularly relevant to the specific problem of security exceptionalism, the argument that security necessity justifies departing from ordinary rights protections in ways that cannot be subject to normal legal scrutiny because the security stakes are too high. Dworkin's argument in Taking Rights Seriously (1977) that rights are constraints on governmental action rather than values to be balanced against other values provides the strongest theoretical rebuttal of security exceptionalism: if the prohibition on torture, the right to habeas corpus, and the prohibition on arbitrary detention are genuine rights rather than merely strong policy preferences, they cannot be overridden by the claim that security necessity demands it, any more than the right not to be murdered can be overridden by the claim that executing an innocent person would improve public order.

The limitation of the Dworkinian approach, and the qualification that the legislative framework proposed here must acknowledge, is that not all security measures constitute rights violations. The surveillance of a documented terrorist suspect with judicial authorization is not a rights violation but a lawfully constrained security measure. The detention of a person arrested with probable cause and produced before a magistrate within twenty-four hours is not arbitrary detention but lawful criminal process. The deployment of military forces to restore order in a genuine breakdown of civil government, authorized by Parliament and governed by rules of engagement that protect civilian lives, is not a violation of the right to liberty but a constitutional exercise of emergency state power. The legislative framework proposed here is designed to enable these legitimate security measures while prohibiting the illegitimate ones, and the distinction between the two categories is drawn by the quality of the legal basis, the independence of the authorization, and the availability of accountability mechanisms.

CHAPTER NINE: INTERNATIONAL LAW OBLIGATIONS AND THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

9.1 Treaty Obligations and Domestic Legislation: The Incorporation Problem

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh is a party to numerous international human rights and humanitarian law instruments whose provisions are directly relevant to the legislative framework for security governance. The principal instruments include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 2000), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ratified 1998), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1990), the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols (all ratified), and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In 2025, the interim government took the important step of approving Bangladesh's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which establishes a mechanism for regular monitoring visits to detention sites.

The incorporation of these treaty obligations into domestic law is incomplete and inadequate. Bangladesh's courts have been inconsistent in whether they treat international treaty obligations as directly applicable in domestic proceedings or as requiring legislative incorporation before they create rights enforceable in domestic courts. The Supreme Court has on several occasions cited international human rights standards in its constitutional jurisprudence, treating them as relevant interpretive guides even where not directly applicable as law, but this approach is inadequate to ensure consistent and comprehensive implementation of treaty obligations.

A comprehensive legislative framework for security governance should include a provision explicitly incorporating Bangladesh's international human rights and humanitarian law obligations as a standard of interpretation and application for all security legislation, specifying that all provisions of the national defense and security legislative framework shall be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with Bangladesh's obligations under the treaties to which it is a party, and that any provision that cannot be so interpreted shall be applied in the manner most closely approximating compliance with those obligations. This incorporation provision would not give international treaty bodies jurisdiction to override domestic legislation but would ensure that the security legislation framework is systematically oriented toward compliance with international standards rather than systematically oriented toward avoiding their application.

9.2 The Rome Statute and International Criminal Court Jurisdiction

Bangladesh is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and therefore its citizens are not subject to ICC jurisdiction for crimes committed in Bangladesh, unless the UN Security Council refers a situation to the ICC under Article 13(b) of the Statute. The question of whether Bangladesh should accede to the Rome Statute is one that the legislative and constitutional reform agenda should address, because the principle of complementarity that governs the ICC's jurisdiction, under which the ICC exercises jurisdiction only when national courts are unwilling or unable to genuinely investigate and prosecute, creates a direct incentive for states to maintain credible domestic accountability for serious crimes under international law.

A Bangladesh that maintains a functioning domestic criminal justice framework capable of genuinely prosecuting crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide, including when committed by members of the security forces, can claim the protection of the complementarity principle and thereby reduce the probability of ICC jurisdiction over its nationals. A Bangladesh that permits systematic impunity for such crimes by its security forces creates the conditions under which ICC referral might eventually be sought by the international community. From this

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

perspective, the domestic legislative reforms proposed throughout this Part serve Bangladesh's international legal interests directly, by building the credible domestic accountability that the complementarity principle requires.

Accession to the Rome Statute would formalize Bangladesh's commitment to the principle that crimes against humanity and war crimes are subject to international accountability regardless of the perpetrator's institutional affiliation, and would send a powerful signal to Bangladesh's security forces that the era of impunity for the most serious abuses is definitively ended. The political and institutional resistance to accession would be significant, given the military's historical sensitivity to any external accountability mechanism, but it represents the most powerful available legislative signal of genuine commitment to the accountability norms that the July Revolution placed at the center of Bangladesh's reform agenda.

9.3 The Geneva Convention Implementation: Laws of Armed Conflict in Domestic Law

Bangladesh's obligations under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols include the obligation to implement the laws of armed conflict in domestic law and practice, including through military training, through penal legislation that criminalizes grave breaches of the Conventions, and through the maintenance of institutional structures that can investigate and prosecute violations. The Bangladesh Armed Forces' training in international humanitarian law, conducted through the military education system and reinforced through peacekeeping pre-deployment training at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, provides the operational foundation for compliance.

The legislative foundation is less complete. Bangladesh does not have a standalone Geneva Conventions Act comparable to the instruments enacted by the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and other Commonwealth states, which provide explicit domestic criminal jurisdiction over grave breaches of the Conventions and a clear legal basis for prosecuting such breaches regardless of the perpetrator's nationality or the location of the offense. The absence of such legislation creates a technical legal gap that could impede prosecution of grave breaches in circumstances where the ordinary criminal law does not provide an adequate basis.

The enactment of a Geneva Conventions Implementation Act, providing explicit domestic criminal jurisdiction over grave breaches and incorporating the definitional framework of the Conventions into domestic law, is a straightforward legislative reform with significant symbolic and practical importance. It would complement the military training framework for international humanitarian law compliance with a legislative foundation that signals Bangladesh's commitment to the laws of armed conflict as binding domestic law rather than merely as international obligations managed through military doctrine.

CONCLUSION TO PART SEVEN: LAW AS THE ARCHITECTURE OF ACCOUNTABLE SECURITY

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The analysis of Bangladesh's legislative architecture for national security developed across this Part yields a central finding that connects the most technical dimensions of legal drafting to the deepest questions of democratic governance. Law is not merely the formal expression of political will applied to security matters. It is the architecture within which security institutions operate, the constraint that separates legitimate security activity from arbitrary state violence, and the framework through which citizens exercise their democratic right to define the conditions under which the state may use force in their name.

The legislative heritage Bangladesh carries from the colonial period, the Army Act of 1952, the Navy Ordinance of 1961, the Police Act of 1861, the Official Secrets Act of 1923, and the Special Powers Act of 1974, was not designed for a democratic state in which citizens are rights-bearing principals rather than subject-population to be administered. These instruments were designed for a colonial or quasi-colonial security establishment whose primary purpose was maintaining order on behalf of an authority whose legitimacy rested on power rather than consent. Continuing to operate Bangladesh's security institutions under these legal instruments is not merely a technical anachronism. It is a structural guarantee that the security establishment will continue to behave in ways incompatible with democratic governance, because the legal framework within which it operates was designed to produce those behaviors.

The legislative reform agenda that this Part has developed, from the constitutional amendments on civil-military relations through the comprehensive National Defense and Security Act, represents the legal architecture for a security establishment that serves a democratic state rather than a colonial one. It is demanding legislation to write, more demanding to enact against institutional resistance, and most demanding of all to implement against the organizational cultures that decades of impunity have generated. But it is legislation that Bangladesh's democratic development requires, that the July Revolution created the political space to pursue, and that the constitutional reform process launched by the July Charter has placed within reach for the first time in the country's independent history.

The path from the current legislative patchwork to the coherent democratic security governance framework proposed in this Part is not a short one. It requires sustained political will across more than one election cycle, the building of institutional capacity in the oversight bodies that the framework creates, the cultural transformation of security institutions whose self-understanding must evolve from instruments of state power to servants of democratic sovereignty, and the development of a legal profession with the expertise in security law, military justice, and intelligence oversight that genuine implementation requires. None of these requirements will be met quickly or without significant resistance.

But the July Revolution demonstrated, at the cost of 1,400 lives, what the alternative to genuine security sector reform looks like. That cost provides the most powerful argument available for the legislative reform agenda this Part has proposed, and the most compelling obligation on Bangladesh's democratic institutions to pursue it with the seriousness and urgency that the moment demands.

Part Eight will turn to the theory and practice of defense policy drafting itself, examining the methodologies for drafting comprehensive national security strategies, defense white papers, and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

force planning documents, and developing the specific draft legislative and policy frameworks that the preceding analysis has identified as Bangladesh's most urgent requirements.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SEVEN

Primary Legal Sources

The Army Act, 1952. Laws of Bangladesh. bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd.

The Navy Ordinance, 1961. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Air Force Act, 1953. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Special Powers Act, 1974. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Official Secrets Act, 1923. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009 (as amended 2012, 2013). Laws of Bangladesh.

The Right to Information Act, 2009. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Public Procurement Act, 2006. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Border Guard Bangladesh Act, 2010. Laws of Bangladesh.

The International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 as amended by Ordinances 2025.

The Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025. Laws of Bangladesh.

The Army Regulations Volume I (Rules), 1975. CGDF.

Constitutional and Reform Documents

Constitution Reform Commission Report, February 2025. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.

July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025. Bangladesh Gazette, November 13, 2025.

Key Legislative Reforms of 2025 in Bangladesh. The Daily Star, January 6, 2026.

July Charter and Constitutional Reforms in Bangladesh. ConstitutionNet, December 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Human Rights and Security Sector Reform Reports

After the Monsoon Revolution: A Roadmap to Lasting Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh. Human Rights Watch, January 27, 2025.

UN Rights Office Suggests Restructuring Bangladesh's Security Sector, RAB's Disbanding. OHCHR Fact Finding Report, February 2025.

UN Calls for Dissolution of RAB, Restriction of BGB to Border Duties and DGFI to Military Intelligence. bdnews24, February 2025.

Without Reform, Bangladesh Risks Backsliding into Repression. The Diplomat, March 2025.

Bangladesh: Concerns Around New Ordinances, Opposition Ban and Arrests, and Lack of Police Reform. CIVICUS Monitor, September 2025.

World Report 2026: Bangladesh. Human Rights Watch, February 2026.

NCP Manifesto Proposes UAV Brigade, Expanded Reserves and Intelligence Sector Reforms. bdmilitary.com, January 2026.

RFKHR Visit to RAB Secret Detention Site Underscores the Need for Further Accountability and Reform Efforts. Robert and Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, July 2025.

Is Official Secrets Act Relevant in Bangladesh? The Daily Star, May 2021.

Joint Statement on Emerging Digital Laws in Bangladesh. Robert and Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center, February 2025.

A Critical Analysis of Digital Rights Reform and Governance Transformation. Lawyers Club Bangladesh, May 2025.

International and Comparative Legal Sources

Dworkin, Ronald. Taking Rights Seriously. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.

Kant, Immanuel. The Metaphysics of Morals. Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. Revised edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Hart, H.L.A. The Concept of Law. Third edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Waldron, Jeremy. Law and Disagreement. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

United Nations Human Rights Committee. General Comment 35: Article 9 of the ICCPR. CCPR/C/GC/35, 2014.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. International Human Rights Standards for Law Enforcement. Geneva: OHCHR, 1996.

United Nations General Assembly. United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, A/RES/60/288, 2006 and successive reviews.

UK Investigatory Powers Act 2016. legislation.gov.uk.

Canada: Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act 1984 as amended.

Australia: Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 as amended.

South Africa: Defence Act 2002 and National Key Points Act as amended post-apartheid.

Germany: BND-Gesetz (Federal Intelligence Service Act) 2017 as amended.

Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh. GSDRC, September 2015.

End of Part Seven

Part Eight will examine the theory and methodology of defense policy drafting, including the analytical frameworks used in drafting national security strategies, defense white papers, and force planning documents, and will develop specific draft policy documents addressing Bangladesh's most urgent security governance requirements for the period 2026 to 2040.

PART EIGHT: THE THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING: NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGIES, DEFENSE WHITE PAPERS, FORCE PLANNING DOCUMENTS, AND THE ART OF NECESSITY-BASED POLICY CONSTRUCTION

First Edition, 2026

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART EIGHT

Every dimension of defense policy that this textbook has examined across seven preceding parts converges in this Part on a single practical and intellectual challenge: how does a state actually write its defense policy? How does the strategic theory analyzed in Part One, the geopolitical realities mapped in Part Six, the legislative architecture constructed in Part Seven, the economic constraints quantified in Part Five, and the doctrinal requirements outlined in Parts Three and Four become organized into coherent, publicly defensible, institutionally actionable documents that guide real decisions by real institutions allocating real resources against real threats?

This is the question of defense policy drafting, and it is both simpler and more difficult than it first appears. Simpler, because the structural elements of a well-crafted defense policy document are known, documented in the experience of dozens of states that have gone through the process, and teachable as a craft. More difficult, because the craft of strategic writing must be combined with the substance of strategic judgment, and strategic judgment about Bangladesh's specific circumstances requires not only technical knowledge of military affairs but philosophical clarity about values, honest assessment of constraints, and the political skill to produce a document that commands enough consensus to be implemented while remaining analytically honest about its assumptions.

Part Eight addresses both the technical and the substantive dimensions of this challenge. It opens with a comprehensive examination of the theory and methodology of defense policy drafting, drawing on comparative experience from states that have produced national security strategies and defense white papers of various kinds and quality. It then analyzes the specific types of documents that Bangladesh's defense policy architecture requires, from the highest-level National Security Strategy through the Defense White Paper, the Force Planning Guidance, the defense program budgeting framework, and the specific bilateral agreement framework. For each document type, it provides a detailed drafting methodology and, in the case of the most critical documents, actual draft texts constructed from the preceding analysis. It examines the role of necessity-based drafting, the philosophical and practical approach that grounds policy prescriptions in demonstrated requirements rather than in institutional preference or strategic fashion. And it develops the institutional machinery through which the drafting process should be organized, managed, and kept honest.

The specific contemporary moment in which this Part is written, April 2026, with the BNP-led government of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman newly installed following the February election, with President Trump's letter pressing Dhaka to sign ACSA and GSOMIA defense agreements, with China pressing the Teesta project and the comprehensive strategic partnership deeper, and with the Myanmar border crisis continuing to generate both security threats and humanitarian obligations, makes the analytical work of this Part immediately applicable. Bangladesh's new government needs these documents now. The question is whether it will produce them with the rigor, the honesty, and the democratic accountability that the stakes demand.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING

1.1 What Makes a Defense Policy Document: Genre, Function, and Quality

Defense policy documents are not academic papers, nor are they propaganda, nor are they operational orders. They occupy a distinctive and demanding genre that requires qualities from their authors that are not commonly found in combination: the analytical rigor of academic research, the communicative clarity of good journalism, the institutional sensitivity of experienced bureaucracy, and the strategic vision of genuine leadership. Understanding the genre is a prerequisite for executing it well.

A defense policy document is, in its most fundamental character, a document that connects ends to means through clearly stated logic. The ends are the national security objectives the document articulates. The means are the military, diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments the document proposes to deploy. The logic is the strategic argument that explains why these particular means, applied in these particular ways, against these particular threats and opportunities, will achieve these particular objectives within the available resources and constraints. A document that states objectives without connecting them to means is a wish list. A document that describes means without connecting them to objectives is an institutional shopping list. Neither is a defense policy document in the serious sense.

The theorist who has most precisely captured the requirements of genuinely strategic writing is Colin Gray, who argued throughout his career from Modern Strategy (1999) to The Future of Strategy (2015) that strategy must be understood as a dialogue between political purpose and military means conducted through all the instruments of statecraft in a specific historical and geographical context. Gray's insistence on the contextual specificity of strategy, the idea that good strategic thinking is always about this state, in this environment, at this moment, facing these specific challenges, with these specific resources is the methodological principle that should guide defense policy drafting. Generic advice applicable to any state in any circumstance is not strategic guidance but platitude.

The quality standards for defense policy documents can be assessed against five criteria drawn from the best comparative practice. The first is analytical honesty: does the document accurately represent the threats, the resources available, and the gap between the two, or does it paper over uncomfortable realities with aspirational language? The second is internal consistency: do the objectives, the means proposed, and the constraints acknowledged fit together in a coherent logical structure, or do the documents aspire to ends that the proposed means cannot achieve within the stated constraints? The third is implementability: are the specific policy prescriptions actionable through the institutional machinery the state actually possesses, or are they dependent on institutional capacities that do not exist and whose development is not separately planned for? The fourth is democratic accountability: is the document honest with the public and with Parliament about what the state is doing with defense resources and why, within the legitimate

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

limits of operational security? And the fifth is adaptability: does the document build in the mechanisms for review, revision, and learning that strategic environments inevitably require, or does it present fixed prescriptions as if the environment will not change?

1.2 The Hierarchy of Defense Policy Documents

Effective defense policy is organized as a hierarchy of documents, each nested within the guidance of the document above it and providing more specific direction to the documents below. Understanding this hierarchy is essential to understanding what each type of document is trying to accomplish and what qualities it must have to accomplish it.

At the apex of the hierarchy sits the National Security Strategy, the document that defines the state's broadest national interests and security objectives, establishes the strategic context within which all subordinate policy is made, and articulates the government's theory of how security will be achieved across the full range of instruments of national power. The NSS is a political document as much as a technical one: it reflects the governing philosophy of the government that produces it and provides the political framework within which more technical defense policy choices are made. The United States produces an NSS with each new administration, the most recent being the Trump administration's November 2025 NSS that has direct implications for Bangladesh as analyzed in Part Six. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, India, and other democracies produce equivalent documents under various titles.

Below the NSS in the hierarchy sits the Defense White Paper or Defense Policy Review, which translates the strategic framework of the NSS into specific guidance for the defense establishment. The Defense White Paper explains what threats the defense establishment must address, what military capabilities are required to address those threats, how those capabilities will be organized and resourced, and how the defense establishment is expected to develop over the planning period. It is more technical than the NSS but less operational than the documents below it, and it must maintain strategic coherence with the NSS while providing actionable direction to the defense establishment.

Below the White Paper sits the Force Planning Guidance or equivalent document, which translates White Paper capability requirements into specific force structure decisions: how many brigades, how many submarines, how many fighter squadrons, how much artillery, organized in what way, under what command structure, trained to what standards, equipped with what systems. Force Planning Guidance is classified in most states, though its general implications are often made public through defense budget presentations and parliamentary statements.

Below Force Planning Guidance sits the Defense Program Budget, which translates force structure decisions into specific annual and multi-year resource allocations: how much money for what purposes in which fiscal years, financing through which mechanisms, delivered through which procurement channels. The Program Budget is the document that gives defense policy its fiscal reality: without it, all the documents above it are aspirational rather than operational.

At the bottom of the hierarchy, and connected to all the documents above, sit the operational documents: the operational concepts that define how forces will be employed, the doctrine

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

documents that guide training and tactics, the capability plans that specify what equipment will be acquired in what sequence, and the alliance and partnership documents that define how Bangladesh's forces will work with those of other states.

This hierarchy is not merely organizational tidiness. It is the mechanism through which strategic coherence is maintained across the entire defense policy system. When strategic coherence breaks down, when force planning is disconnected from strategic guidance, or when procurement decisions are disconnected from force planning, the result is exactly the kind of capability mismatch and waste that has characterized Bangladesh's defense policy under Forces Goal 2030, as analyzed in Part Four.

1.3 Necessity-Based Drafting: The Philosophical Foundation

The concept of necessity-based drafting, which this Part introduces as its guiding methodological principle, requires more than passing definition because it represents a specific philosophical stance toward policy construction that has important practical consequences.

Necessity-based drafting means that every element of a defense policy document, every capability requirement, every procurement program, every institutional arrangement, every alliance commitment, must be justified by demonstrated necessity. The burden of proof falls on the proposer to show that the proposed measure is necessary to achieve a defined security objective, that it is the most cost-effective means of achieving that objective among the available alternatives, and that its costs, financial, diplomatic, and in terms of civil liberties and democratic accountability, are proportionate to the security benefit it delivers.

This standard is demanding and deliberately so. It requires that defense planning begin from an honest threat assessment rather than from institutional preference, existing investment commitments, or supplier relationships. It requires that capability requirements be derived from mission requirements rather than from what is available in the market or what a particular service branch would like to have. It requires that procurement decisions be subject to comparative analysis rather than decided on the basis of established supplier relationships. And it requires that every element of the defense program be periodically reviewed to determine whether the necessity that originally justified it still applies.

The philosophical antecedents of necessity-based drafting are found in the tradition of practical reason from Aristotle's phronesis through Kant's categorical imperative and its application to institutional design, and more specifically in the tradition of proportionality analysis that runs through just war theory and international humanitarian law. Proportionality, the principle that measures taken to achieve security objectives must be proportionate to the threats they address and the costs they impose, is the core normative principle of necessity-based drafting. A state that procures military capabilities disproportionate to its threat environment is not displaying strategic ambition; it is misallocating resources that could be used for development purposes with greater public benefit. A state that restricts civil liberties disproportionate to the security threats it faces is not demonstrating strength; it is undermining the democratic legitimacy that is the ultimate foundation of security.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Necessity-based drafting stands in contrast to two other common approaches to defense policy that produce inferior results. The first is aspirational drafting, in which defense policy documents articulate what the state would like to achieve without honest assessment of whether the resources and institutional capacity to achieve it are available. Aspirational drafting produces documents that are rhetorically impressive and institutionally irrelevant, because the gap between aspiration and implementation is too large to bridge without the honest intermediate analysis that the necessity-based approach requires. Bangladesh's Forces Goal 2030, in its original conception, had strong aspirational elements: it articulated what a transformed military would look like without always providing the resource plan and institutional change program that would be required to get there.

The second inferior approach is precedent-based drafting, in which defense policy documents are constructed primarily by reference to what similar states have done or what external advisers recommend as best practice, without adequate customization to the specific circumstances of the state in question. Precedent-based drafting produces documents that may be technically competent according to generic strategic criteria but that fail to engage adequately with the specific geographic, economic, political, and cultural context of the state they purport to guide. The generic advice that appears in many donor-funded security sector reform recommendations suffers from this defect: it reflects what works in different contexts without adequate analysis of whether it will work in Bangladesh's specific circumstances.

1.4 The Drafting Process: Institutional Machinery and Democratic Legitimacy

The institutional machinery through which defense policy documents are drafted matters as much as the methodology applied in their construction. A technically excellent document produced through a process that excludes critical stakeholders or that lacks democratic legitimacy is likely to fail in implementation even if its analytical content is sound. A document produced through a genuinely consultative, transparent, and accountable process is more likely to command the institutional commitment and public support that effective implementation requires, even if its technical content is imperfect.

The best contemporary practice in defense policy drafting combines several institutional elements. The lead institution is typically the executive branch, usually the Ministry of Defense or an equivalent body with cross-departmental coordination responsibility, because executive accountability requires that the government own the document and can be held responsible for delivering on its commitments. But the lead institution should work through a process that includes structured consultation with the parliamentary defense committee, providing draft documents for scrutiny and incorporating parliamentary input before finalization. It should include technical input from the professional military, which has essential knowledge about operational requirements and capability options, while maintaining civilian authority over the final decisions about objectives and priorities. It should include academic and civil society input, organized through structured workshops, public submissions, or consultative panels, that brings in perspectives that the professional military and civilian bureaucracy may systematically miss. And it should be transparent in its process and in its conclusions to the degree that operational security permits.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Australia's 2023 Defense Strategic Review, which fundamentally restructured Australian defense policy in response to a changed strategic environment, provides a recent model of process that Bangladesh can learn from. The review was commissioned by the incoming Labor government, conducted by two eminent persons with defense expertise and public credibility, involved structured consultations with the armed forces and defense industry, drew on academic and think tank expertise, engaged with allied partners in Australia's strategic relationships, and produced a public report whose analytical framework and major conclusions were available for democratic scrutiny. The classified annexes containing the most operationally sensitive material were retained within the government, but the public document was substantive enough that genuine democratic deliberation about its implications was possible.

India's defense policy process, while less publicly transparent than Australia's, involves a Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff that coordinates cross-service planning, a Defence Planning Committee chaired by the National Security Adviser that connects defense planning to broader national security strategy, and periodic Defence White Papers that have become somewhat more detailed and analytical in recent iterations. India's Chiefs of Defence Staff position, created in 2019, has improved joint military advice to the civilian leadership, a reform that Bangladesh might usefully consider for its own Joint Chief of Defence Staff structure.

CHAPTER TWO: DRAFTING THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR BANGLADESH

2.1 Structure and Content Requirements

The Bangladesh National Security Strategy should be structured as a public document of between thirty and fifty pages, organized to take the reader through a logical progression from strategic context through national interests, from threat assessment through strategy articulation, and from strategic priorities through implementation framework. The following structural template, derived from best comparative practice and adapted to Bangladesh's specific requirements, provides the architecture for this document.

Part One of the NSS should be titled "Bangladesh's Strategic Position and National Interests." It should open with an honest description of Bangladesh's geographic position, including the implications of its location at the junction of South Asia and Southeast Asia, at the head of the Bay of Bengal, surrounded on three sides by India, and sharing its southeastern border with a Myanmar in the grip of civil war. It should describe the structural features of Bangladesh's international environment that no government can change but all governments must navigate: the power asymmetry with all major neighbors, the depth of economic interdependence with China and India, the strategic significance that Bangladesh's geographic position gives it in the calculations of the United States, and the complex dynamics of the Bay of Bengal as an increasingly contested maritime space.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This section should then articulate Bangladesh's national interests in the hierarchy described in Part Six: vital interests, whose protection justifies the use of all available instruments; important interests, pursued actively through all appropriate means; and desirable interests, worth seeking but not at significant cost to higher priorities. This hierarchy is not a bureaucratic exercise. It is the analytical foundation that prevents the common failure of defense policy documents to distinguish between objectives that genuinely drive resource allocation and objectives that are stated for rhetorical purposes without genuine strategic commitment.

Part Two should be titled "The Strategic Environment: Threats, Opportunities, and Uncertainties." This section must be analytically honest about the security environment in ways that are uncomfortable for diplomatic sensitivities. It must name the specific sources of security concern, including the specific risks that the India relationship's current troubled state poses for Bangladesh's security and the specific dependencies that the China relationship creates. It must address the Myanmar border crisis directly, acknowledging both its humanitarian dimension and its emerging security dimension as Rohingya armed mobilization creates cross-border dynamics with direct implications for Bangladesh's own security. It must address the emerging great power competition in the Bay of Bengal as a structural feature of Bangladesh's strategic environment, not as a distant abstraction.

The section should also address non-traditional security threats with the seriousness they deserve: climate change and sea level rise, which threaten the physical territory of Bangladesh in ways that no military capability can fully address; economic security threats including supply chain vulnerability and energy import dependence; cyber threats to critical infrastructure; and the internal security dimensions of economic inequality, extremist political movements, and the social consequences of large-scale displacement from both climate and conflict.

Part Three should be titled "Bangladesh's Strategy: Ends, Ways, and Means." This is the heart of the document, where the strategic logic that connects the national interests of Part One to the threat environment of Part Two through the proposed policy responses must be stated with clarity and intellectual honesty. The strategy should be organized around the five pillars identified in Part Six: credible conventional deterrence, economic diplomacy as strategic instrument, multilateral institutional investment, resilience building, and principled normativity. Each pillar should be described in terms of what it is designed to achieve, how it connects to specific threats and opportunities in the strategic environment, what instruments of national power it deploys, and what success looks like in terms that can be measured.

The strategy section should explicitly address the central strategic dilemma that Bangladesh faces in 2026: how to maintain genuine non-alignment and strategic autonomy in a structural environment that is increasingly pressing toward alignment. The question of the ACSA and GSOMIA defense agreements with the United States, pressed upon the new BNP government by Trump's February 2026 letter to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, is precisely the kind of concrete strategic decision point that the NSS should address in principle, providing the framework within which the specific decision will be made, rather than addressing it only at the technical diplomatic level.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The NSS should state clearly that Bangladesh will not sign defense agreements that compromise its intelligence sovereignty or enable the use of its territory and infrastructure as a forward base for operations in conflicts that are not Bangladesh's own. It should equally state that Bangladesh will pursue defense cooperation with the United States, as with all strategic partners, in domains where that cooperation serves Bangladesh's specific and demonstrated security interests: maritime surveillance, peacekeeping capability enhancement, disaster response, and access to equipment that improves Bangladesh's deterrent capability in ways consistent with its non-aligned posture. This principled framework gives the diplomatic negotiators clear guidance without preempting the specific technical negotiations that determine whether any particular agreement is consistent with Bangladesh's interests.

Part Four should be titled "Implementation: Priorities, Resources, and Accountability." This section should specify the specific policy changes, capability investments, institutional reforms, and diplomatic initiatives that the strategy requires, organized in a priority sequence that acknowledges resource constraints honestly. It should connect the strategy to the defense budget process and should specify the oversight mechanisms through which Parliament and the public can hold the government accountable for delivering on the strategy's commitments.

2.2 Draft Text: Bangladesh National Security Strategy 2026

The following text constitutes a draft of the core analytical sections of a Bangladesh National Security Strategy, organized according to the structure above and incorporating the analysis developed across the preceding parts of this textbook. This draft is offered as a working text for deliberation rather than as a final document, and it is understood that the actual document would require the consultative process described in Section 1.4, engagement with classified threat assessments not available in this text, and the political endorsement of the elected government.

BANGLADESH NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2026: SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN A CONTESTED WORLD

INTRODUCTION

This National Security Strategy articulates the government of Bangladesh's understanding of the country's security environment, its conception of Bangladesh's fundamental national interests, and the strategy it will pursue to protect those interests and advance those of the Bangladeshi people in one of the most challenging strategic environments the country has faced since independence.

Bangladesh was born from a liberation war that demonstrated, at terrible cost, the inseparability of security and democracy. The security of Bangladesh is inseparable from its identity as a democratic, rights-respecting, and constitutionally governed state. A security policy that undermines those foundations undermines itself. This Strategy is therefore a strategy not merely for military security but for the security of Bangladesh's democratic institutions, its territorial integrity, its economic independence, and its place in an international order governed by rules rather than by the raw exercise of power.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The fundamental principle guiding this Strategy is the principle "friendship with all, malice toward none," inherited from the founding generation of Bangladesh's independence and tested, validated, and refined through five decades of navigating a complex international environment. This principle is not passivity or indifference. It is an active, principled engagement with all partners in Bangladesh's international environment that is guided by Bangladesh's own interests and values rather than by the preferences of any external power.

PART ONE: BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION AND NATIONAL INTERESTS

Bangladesh's Strategic Geography

Bangladesh occupies one of the most strategically significant geographic positions in South Asia. Situated at the junction of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, at the northern apex of the Bay of Bengal, surrounded on three sides by India and sharing its southeastern border with Myanmar's Rakhine State, Bangladesh is at the convergence of several of the most consequential geopolitical dynamics of the contemporary international system.

The Bay of Bengal is not merely Bangladesh's maritime frontier. It is the avenue through which approximately one quarter of the world's traded goods pass annually, the corridor through which Middle Eastern energy supplies reach the energy-hungry economies of East Asia, and an increasingly contested strategic space in which Chinese, Indian, and American naval power is growing simultaneously. The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Permanent Court of Arbitration have awarded Bangladesh sovereign rights over an Exclusive Economic Zone of 118,813 square kilometers. This enormous maritime endowment, rich in fisheries, potential hydrocarbon resources, and strategic position, is both an asset that Bangladesh must protect and a responsibility that Bangladesh must responsibly manage.

Bangladesh's land geography is equally consequential. The three-sided Indian embrace is a geopolitical reality that no government can alter and that every government must manage with wisdom and patience. India is Bangladesh's liberator, its largest neighbor, its most complex bilateral partner, and the state with which its most fundamental connectivity, in water, in trade, in transportation, and in security, is irremovably tied. Myanmar is Bangladesh's troubled eastern neighbor, currently in the grip of a civil war whose consequences spill across the border in the form of refugees, weapons, drugs, and the growing armed formations of Rohingya groups whose mobilization creates security dynamics that Bangladesh cannot ignore.

National Interests: A Clear Hierarchy

Bangladesh's vital interests, those that justify the full deployment of all instruments of national power in their protection, are three in number.

The first is the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bangladesh, including the security of its Exclusive Economic Zone and its maritime resources. Bangladesh cannot permit any external actor, state or non-state, to occupy, control, or substantially encroach upon its territory or its sovereign maritime space. This interest is non-negotiable and its defense is the primary justification for the maintenance of the Bangladesh Armed Forces.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The second is the constitutional and democratic order of Bangladesh. The state of Bangladesh derives its legitimacy from the consent of its citizens, expressed through free and fair elections, and from its commitment to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by its Constitution. Any attempt, external or internal, to subvert this constitutional order is a threat to Bangladesh's security at the most fundamental level.

The third is the minimum economic security of the Bangladeshi people: the maintenance of the trade, energy, and economic relationships that allow Bangladesh's economy to function and its population to meet their basic needs. A Bangladesh whose economy collapses, whose trade routes are cut, or whose energy imports are interrupted faces a security crisis as severe as any military aggression.

Bangladesh's important interests, those pursued actively through all appropriate instruments, include stable bilateral relationships with India, China, the United States, and other significant partners; the management of the Myanmar border crisis and the Rohingya humanitarian emergency; the security and development of the Bay of Bengal maritime environment; Bangladesh's leadership role in UN peacekeeping and multilateral institutions; and the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism from establishing a significant operational base within Bangladesh's borders.

PART TWO: THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The Regional Security Environment

The security environment in which Bangladesh operates in 2026 is more complex and more challenging than at any point since independence, for reasons that are both structural and conjunctural.

At the structural level, Bangladesh faces the classic predicament of a small-to-medium state in an environment characterized by the strategic competition of major powers whose interests intersect with its geographic position. China and India are engaged in a sustained strategic competition across South Asia in which Bangladesh's territory, ports, resources, and political alignment are all potential objects of strategic calculation. The United States, pursuing an Indo-Pacific strategy whose central objective is preventing Chinese dominance of the region's maritime spaces, views Bangladesh's Bay of Bengal position as strategically significant and is actively pressing for the defense agreements and partnerships that would give American strategy access to Bangladeshi geography.

Bangladesh cannot be indifferent to these structural pressures, and it should not pretend to be. What it can do, and what this Strategy commits it to doing, is manage these pressures through active and principled diplomacy that serves Bangladesh's interests rather than any external power's agenda, while maintaining the military credibility that ensures Bangladesh's preferences are respected rather than dismissed.

At the conjunctural level, the post-July Revolution period has created both acute bilateral tensions, particularly with India following the collapse of the Hasina government that New Delhi

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

had strongly supported, and new diplomatic opportunities, as multiple powers recalibrate their relationships with a Bangladesh whose strategic alignment is no longer taken for granted. The elections of February 2026 and the formation of the BNP-led government create a specific diplomatic moment in which the reset of multiple bilateral relationships is possible. This Strategy is designed to guide that reset toward durable partnerships that serve Bangladesh's interests rather than temporary arrangements that serve others'.

The India relationship requires particular analysis because of both its structural importance and its current difficulty. The relationship was severely damaged during the eighteen months following the July 2024 Revolution by a combination of specific incidents, mutual misperceptions, and the structural loss of the bilateral arrangement that had defined it for fifteen years. The path to a reset exists, and both governments have signaled their awareness that prolonged tension serves neither country's interests. The specific issues that must be resolved include the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty renewal whose expiry in December 2026 is imminent, the Teesta water arrangement whose continued delay is politically unsustainable in Bangladesh, the border killings that represent a systematic violation of the rights of Bangladeshi citizens, and the trade restrictions that have imposed costs on both economies. Bangladesh approaches these issues with both firmness about its legitimate interests and openness to the cooperative framework that the structural logic of the relationship demands.

The China relationship is Bangladesh's most economically significant bilateral relationship and its most strategically complex. China is the dominant supplier of Bangladesh's military equipment, a major financier of its infrastructure, its largest trading partner for imports, and a growing source of diplomatic support and strategic validation. This relationship has delivered genuine benefits to Bangladesh and will continue to do so. It has also created dependencies that constrain Bangladesh's strategic autonomy in ways that this Strategy acknowledges honestly. The management of the China relationship requires simultaneously preserving the economic and defense cooperation benefits while diversifying Bangladesh's procurement, financing, and diplomatic relationships enough to maintain genuine strategic independence.

The Myanmar situation is not a peripheral security concern but a central one. The Arakan Army's control of Bangladesh's entire southeastern border creates a security environment that is qualitatively different from any Bangladesh has previously faced. Bangladesh is no longer dealing with a state actor on its eastern border but with a sophisticated non-state armed organization whose governance aspirations are explicitly ethno-nationalist, whose treatment of the Rohingya minority it now controls is deeply concerning, and whose power is growing. The approximately 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the growing armed mobilization within the camps, and the cross-border violence that has already killed and injured Bangladeshi citizens make the Myanmar situation an immediate security challenge, not merely a humanitarian one. Bangladesh's strategy for this dimension of its environment must combine diplomatic engagement with the Arakan Army, containment of Rohingya armed group activities in Bangladesh territory, sustained international advocacy for a political framework for Rakhine's future that makes repatriation eventually possible, and adequate border security investment.

Non-Traditional Security Threats

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Climate change represents a long-term security threat to Bangladesh of existential proportions. The scientific consensus projects that approximately seventeen percent of Bangladesh's territory could be inundated by sea level rise by 2050 under medium emissions scenarios, displacing tens of millions of people, destroying agricultural land, and potentially creating security pressures of a magnitude that no conventional military response can address. This is not a marginal or speculative risk. It is a central feature of Bangladesh's security environment that must be integrated into defense and security planning.

The internal security dimensions of Bangladesh's threat environment include the risks from violent extremist organizations that seek to establish influence in the Rohingya camps and in vulnerable communities affected by economic marginalization, and the political violence that has historically characterized Bangladesh's competitive electoral environment. The post-July Revolution period has seen concerning patterns of political violence and mob attacks that the security forces have been inconsistent in addressing, reflecting both institutional incapacity and in some cases institutional complicity. Managing the internal security dimension requires the security sector governance reforms analyzed in Part Seven rather than the expansion of coercive capacity that has historically been the instinctive response to internal security threats.

PART THREE: BANGLADESH'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Strategic Concept: Sovereignty Through Engagement

Bangladesh's strategic concept rests on a synthesis of defensive realism and constructive multilateralism. It is realist in its recognition that power matters in international affairs, that security cannot be wished into existence through good intentions alone, and that Bangladesh must maintain military capabilities sufficient to deter aggression and protect its sovereign interests. It is constructive in its recognition that the rules-based international order, multilateral institutions, and cooperative security arrangements provide the most favorable environment for a state of Bangladesh's size and resources to pursue its interests, and that Bangladesh's most durable strategic asset is its credibility as a consistent, professional, and principled participant in the international institutions that constitute this order.

The strategic concept establishes five lines of effort that together constitute Bangladesh's national security strategy:

The First Line of Effort is Credible Deterrence. Bangladesh will maintain armed forces of sufficient capability and professional quality that no potential adversary can calculate that aggression against Bangladesh would be cost-free. Deterrence does not require symmetry with any potential adversary. It requires the demonstrated ability to impose unacceptable costs through asymmetric means: anti-ship missiles that complicate any adversary's naval planning, air defense systems that deny easy air access, precision artillery that can threaten forward positions at range, and a submarine capability that introduces uncertainty into adversary maritime calculations. Bangladesh will develop these capabilities through the disciplined implementation of the next phase of Forces Goal 2030, financed through a transparent and publicly accountable resource framework.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Second Line of Effort is Principled Non-Alignment. Bangladesh will pursue relations with all significant international actors on the basis of its own interests and values, without alignment with any military bloc or strategic grouping that would foreclose its relationships with other states. This commitment has specific implications for the current diplomatic moment. On the ACSA and GSOMIA agreements pressed by the United States: Bangladesh is prepared to discuss defense cooperation with the United States in specific domains where that cooperation serves Bangladesh's documented security interests, including maritime domain awareness, peacekeeping capability development, and disaster response. Bangladesh is not prepared to sign agreements that compromise its intelligence sovereignty, that commit its territory or infrastructure to the logistics of American military operations in conflicts not of Bangladesh's choosing, or that require Bangladesh to distance itself from its other significant defense and economic partners. Any defense cooperation agreement with the United States must contain explicit prohibitions on the use of Bangladeshi civilian infrastructure for foreign military combat operations, a strict no-foreign-bases clause, and provisions that clearly limit intelligence sharing to Bangladesh's own security interests rather than enabling surveillance of third countries.

The Third Line of Effort is Economic Security. Bangladesh's security is inseparable from its economic trajectory. A Bangladesh whose economy is growing, whose citizens are prospering, and whose international economic relationships are diverse and resilient is a Bangladesh that commands respect and that can sustain the defense and diplomatic investments its security requires. Economic security means diversifying from extreme dependence on any single export market or import supplier. It means developing the Blue Economy to generate sovereign revenues from Bangladesh's maritime endowment. It means building the trade relationships and supply chain positions that give Bangladesh economic leverage in its diplomatic relationships. And it means ensuring that the defense budget is maintained at a level that provides genuine security without crowding out the development investment that creates the economic foundation for long-term security.

The Fourth Line of Effort is Institutional Resilience. Security begins at home. Bangladesh's most fundamental security asset is its domestic institutional integrity: the functioning of its democratic institutions, the independence of its judiciary, the professionalism and accountability of its security forces, and the strength of its civil society. Security institutions that are unaccountable to democratic oversight are not security assets but security liabilities, because they undermine the legitimacy of the state they purport to defend and create the internal conditions for political instability that external actors can exploit. This Strategy commits the government to the security sector governance reforms analyzed in the preceding parts of this textbook, not as a concession to international criticism but as a genuine security imperative.

The Fifth Line of Effort is Multilateral Leadership. Bangladesh's most cost-effective security investment is the sustained and strategic engagement with multilateral institutions through which it builds the rule-based frameworks that constrain great power coercion. Bangladesh's leadership in UN peacekeeping is the most visible expression of this approach, and it will be maintained and developed with the investments in training, technology, and institutional capacity that modern peacekeeping requires. Bangladesh's engagement in BIMSTEC, its use of international legal mechanisms for maritime boundary claims, its participation in UN human rights mechanisms, and its advocacy for the Rohingya cause in international forums are all

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

manifestations of the multilateral leadership approach that this Strategy commits Bangladesh to pursuing systematically.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: ARCHITECTURE AND DRAFT FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Defense White Paper as Strategic Instrument

The Defense White Paper is the operational translation of the National Security Strategy into specific guidance for the defense establishment. Where the NSS speaks of ends and strategy, the White Paper speaks of capability requirements, force structures, resource frameworks, and institutional arrangements. It is the document that military planners, defense procurement officials, parliamentary overseers, and defense industrial partners use to understand what the defense establishment is supposed to be doing and what resources and authorities it has been given to do it.

Bangladesh has never had a comprehensive public Defense White Paper. Forces Goal 2030, while representing the most ambitious defense planning exercise in the country's history, was never articulated in a single, comprehensive, publicly available strategic document that connected capability requirements to threat analysis, resource planning to strategy, and industrial development to force design. The absence of such a document has been a governance deficit that has allowed procurement decisions to be made without adequate strategic justification, budget allocations to be disconnected from capability requirements, and parliamentary oversight to be frustrated by the absence of a comprehensive public baseline against which to measure performance.

The Defense White Paper should cover the following domains, each addressed in dedicated chapters. Chapter One, the Strategic Framework, would restate the relevant elements of the NSS and establish the specific guidance it provides for defense capability planning. Chapter Two, the Threat Assessment Summary, would provide a declassified summary of the threat environment facing the Bangladesh Armed Forces, identifying the specific military and non-military threats that the defense establishment is designed to address. Chapter Three, the Capability Framework, would specify the military capabilities required to address the identified threats across the land, maritime, air, space, and cyber domains. Chapter Four, the Force Structure Guidance, would describe the specific force structure that will be developed to deliver the required capabilities, including the specific units, platforms, and systems to be maintained, developed, and acquired. Chapter Five, the Resource Framework, would provide the multi-year defense budget context, including the formal budget trajectory, the off-budget financing framework disclosed in sufficient detail to enable parliamentary oversight, and the revenue projections from defense enterprise and peacekeeping activities. Chapter Six, the Governance and Accountability Framework, would describe the institutional arrangements for oversight, review, and accountability that ensure the defense establishment operates in accordance with democratic principles and the legislative framework established in Part Seven.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

3.2 Draft Framework: Defense White Paper 2026

BANGLADESH DEFENSE WHITE PAPER 2026: CAPABILITIES FOR DETERRENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, AND DEMOCRATIC SECURITY

CHAPTER ONE: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This Defense White Paper operationalizes the Bangladesh National Security Strategy 2026. It translates the NSS's strategic concept of sovereignty through engagement into specific guidance for the Bangladesh Armed Forces and the defense establishment as a whole.

The primary mission of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, as derived from the NSS and from Article 61 of the Constitution, is to protect Bangladesh's territorial integrity and sovereign rights, including its maritime Exclusive Economic Zone, against military aggression by any state or non-state actor. This primary mission requires a credible conventional deterrent capability organized around the principle of asymmetric cost imposition: the demonstrated ability to make any aggression against Bangladesh unacceptably costly rather than the unachievable goal of symmetrical military parity with any potential adversary.

The secondary mission of the Bangladesh Armed Forces is to contribute to international peace and security through participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which serves both Bangladesh's foreign policy interests and its military capacity development through operational exposure to complex missions.

The tertiary mission, subject to strict constitutional and legislative limits, is to assist civil authorities in genuine national emergencies where civilian security capacity is overwhelmed, under the framework established by the National Defense and Security Act proposed in Part Seven of this textbook.

The guiding doctrinal concept for this White Paper is Three-Domain Denial: the capability to deny any potential adversary uncontested access to Bangladeshi territory, airspace, and maritime space through an integrated set of conventional deterrent measures that raise the cost of aggression to prohibitive levels. Three-Domain Denial is not a warfighting concept but a deterrence concept: its purpose is to prevent conflict, not to prosecute it. Its components are a submarine-capable navy with anti-ship missile armament, an air defense system capable of denying uncontested air access across Bangladesh's territory and immediate maritime zone, and a land force with precision fire capability sufficient to threaten any potential adversary's forward positions at operational range.

CHAPTER TWO: THREAT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The following threat assessment summary is based on the classified National Intelligence Estimate and the Strategic Assessment prepared by the Bangladesh National Security Council Secretariat. It presents the key judgments at the level of classification appropriate for a public document, with more detailed analysis available to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense under appropriate security protocols.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The principal external military threat to Bangladesh in the 2026 to 2035 planning period comes from the potential for interstate conflict arising from the intensifying strategic competition in the Bay of Bengal region. Bangladesh assesses no threat of deliberate, unprovoked military aggression from India or China under current circumstances. Both powers have overwhelming interests in Bangladesh's stability and cooperation that preclude rational calculation in favor of military aggression. What Bangladesh must guard against is the possibility of miscalculation, escalation of border incidents, or the use of military pressure to coerce Bangladesh into specific policy positions, all of which are possibilities in a deteriorating bilateral relationship environment. The security of Bangladesh's maritime space against encroachment, harassment of fishermen, and assertion of claims inconsistent with the ITLOS and PCA awards requires naval presence and surveillance capability that currently falls short of what is needed.

The principal non-state military threat is the growing armed mobilization of Rohingya groups along the Myanmar border, assessed to be the most immediate security threat to Bangladesh's sovereignty in operational terms. The documented cross-border incursions of armed ARSA personnel, the weapons flows into the refugee camp environment, the three-way conflict between ARSA, the Arakan Army, and Myanmar junta remnants that periodically spills into Bangladeshi territory, and the Arakan Army's potential motivation to destabilize the Chittagong Hill Tracts in retaliation for perceived Bangladeshi support for Rohingya armed groups all constitute a complex security challenge requiring an integrated response combining enhanced border security, diplomatic engagement with the Arakan Army, international advocacy for the Rohingya, and careful management of the armed group dynamics within the refugee camp environment.

The principal non-traditional security threat is climate change, which the National Security Council has assessed as posing a long-term existential dimension to Bangladesh's territorial integrity. The defense establishment's role in climate security is limited but real: disaster response capability to deal with increasing frequency and severity of cyclones and floods, sea-based monitoring capability to support Blue Economy management in a changing ocean environment, and planning for the security implications of potential large-scale internal displacement driven by climate impacts.

CHAPTER THREE: CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

The capability framework derived from the Three-Domain Denial concept and the threat assessment identifies five essential capability areas for development in the 2026 to 2035 planning period.

Maritime Deterrence Capability requires expanding the submarine force from the current two aging Ming-class vessels to a fleet of at least six modern diesel-electric submarines capable of sustained patrol operations in the Bay of Bengal. The negotiations for six improved KSS-I submarines from South Korea, if concluded and resourced, would provide this capability with Korean technical standards that represent a meaningful diversification from current Chinese-supply dependency. The submarine fleet will be supported by anti-ship cruise missiles for surface vessels and by an expanded maritime patrol aircraft capability that provides the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

surveillance coverage needed to detect and track potential adversaries' naval activity in Bangladesh's EEZ.

Air Denial Capability requires replacing the aging F-7 and MiG-29 aircraft with a modern multi-role combat aircraft fleet capable of air defense intercept and limited precision strike missions. The procurement of the J-10CE from China, if finalized at the negotiated terms, would provide a generation step improvement in air combat capability. A more balanced longer-term solution would combine a Chinese or Turkish first tranche with a Western second tranche that reduces Chinese air combat dominance of Bangladesh's air force over time. The air defense system capability, specifically the acquisition of medium and long-range surface-to-air missile systems including the Turkish HİSAR and potentially SIPER families, is equally important and in some respects more urgent, because integrated air defense can deny adversary air access regardless of the air-to-air balance.

Precision Land Deterrence requires developing the army's precision fire capability to the point where any adversary contemplating military pressure on Bangladesh must reckon with the ability of Bangladeshi land forces to strike targets at operational range with high accuracy. The existing TRG-230 and TRG-300 Kasirga MLRS systems, and the WS-22 and WS-22B systems acquired from China, provide the foundation for this capability. Expanding their ammunition inventory, developing precision-guided variants, and integrating battlefield surveillance and target acquisition systems to support their employment would substantially enhance their deterrent value.

Border Security Capability requires investment in the BGB's surveillance and patrol technology, the physical barrier infrastructure along the most vulnerable border segments, the intelligence capability to detect armed infiltration before it crosses the border, and the interagency coordination mechanisms that bring together BGB, coast guard, army, police, and intelligence in a joint border security framework. The particular urgency of the Myanmar border segment, where the three-way conflict creates unpredictable threat vectors, requires dedicated investment in surveillance technology including drone-based reconnaissance at the national level and sensor networks at the border unit level.

Cyber and Information Security Capability is the most neglected of the five essential capability areas and the one that poses the most immediate operational risk to Bangladesh's security establishment. Bangladesh's military and governmental communications and command systems are not adequately hardened against sophisticated cyber attack, its military's information operations capability is insufficient for the information environment it operates in, and its critical infrastructure protection against cyber disruption is inadequate. The 2025 Cyber Security Ordinance provides a partial legislative foundation for civilian cyber security, but military cyber security requires a dedicated military capability development program that should be among the highest priorities in the 2026 to 2030 capability investment cycle.

CHAPTER FOUR: FORCE STRUCTURE GUIDANCE

The Force Structure for the Bangladesh Army in 2026 to 2035 should be organized around the three-corps framework established under Forces Goal 2030, with specific enhancements in the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

areas identified in Chapter Three. The priority force structure developments are the creation of a dedicated UAV Brigade capable of operating both tactical surveillance and strike UAVs in support of ground operations, the expansion of the Special Forces Group to enhance the unconventional capability that provides asymmetric deterrent value, the development of an Electronic Warfare capability that can disrupt adversary command and control systems, and the continued mechanization of infantry units to improve operational mobility.

The Bangladesh Navy's force structure goal remains the three-dimensional concept articulated under Forces Goal 2030: submarines, surface combatants, and maritime patrol aircraft operating in an integrated joint framework from the Pekua submarine base and from the existing naval installations at Chittagong, Khulna, and Cox's Bazar. The priority development is the submarine fleet expansion described above, supported by the construction of at least two additional MEKO-type frigates through the indigenous shipbuilding program at Khulna Shipyard with appropriate foreign technical assistance.

The Bangladesh Air Force's force structure requires the most urgent attention of the three services. The current fleet of F-7BGI fighters is operationally obsolescent, the MiG-29s face ongoing availability challenges from the complexity of Russian supply chain management in the current geopolitical environment, and the aging of the fleet without replacement creates a growing capability gap that reduces the air force's contribution to the Three-Domain Denial concept. The highest priority is the combat aircraft replacement program, followed by the continued development of the Yak-130 advanced jet trainer fleet that provides the pilot training foundation for any new combat aircraft.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESOURCE FRAMEWORK

The resource framework for this White Paper is built around three funding streams that together must provide the total investment required for the capability program described in Chapter Four.

The formal defense budget, currently at 40,698 crore taka for fiscal year 2025-26, should increase to reach approximately 1.8 percent of GDP by fiscal year 2030-31, from its current 1.02 percent of GDP. This trajectory represents a genuine and substantial increase in defense investment that is justified by the enhanced threat environment and the modernization requirements described above. It is not an unlimited commitment: it must be achieved within a fiscal framework that also provides for the development investment, social services, and economic infrastructure that Bangladesh's people require and that Bangladesh's democratic institutions have an obligation to deliver.

The off-budget financing stream, which has historically funded the largest capital investments in Bangladesh's defense modernization through government-to-government loan arrangements, must be placed on a transparent and publicly accountable basis consistent with the Defense Finance and Accountability Act proposed in Part Seven. All government-to-government defense loan agreements signed after the effective date of that Act must be disclosed to Parliament within sixty days of signing, with their principal amounts, interest rates, repayment schedules, and any strategic conditions clearly stated. The aggregate off-budget defense financing commitment outstanding must be included in Bangladesh's official national debt statistics. And the repayment

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

obligations must be incorporated into the medium-term fiscal framework through which the Ministry of Finance manages Bangladesh's overall fiscal position.

The defense enterprise and peacekeeping revenue stream represents a genuine economic contribution to the defense establishment's resource base. UN peacekeeping reimbursements are estimated at 80 to 100 million USD annually based on current deployment levels, though the risk of reduced UN peacekeeping financing under American budgetary pressure requires contingency planning. Defense enterprise revenues provide additional resources, but the governance reform framework proposed in Part Five requires that these revenues flow through transparent and publicly accountable mechanisms rather than directly to the armed forces' institutional discretion.

CHAPTER SIX: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

This White Paper commits the Bangladesh defense establishment to the governance reforms analyzed in Parts Five and Seven of this textbook as security imperatives, not merely governance improvements.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense will be provided with classified briefings on the classified annexes to this White Paper, including the detailed threat assessment, the specific force planning targets, and the classified procurement programs, under security protocols that enable genuine oversight without compromising operational security.

The Defense Procurement Review Authority proposed in Part Five will be established by legislation within the first parliamentary session following this White Paper's publication, and all major procurement decisions announced after that date will be subject to its review.

The Inspector General of the Armed Forces will be established as a statutory independent position with access to all defense records and with reporting obligations to Parliament, providing the independent internal oversight that complements parliamentary external oversight.

This White Paper will be reviewed and updated every four years or following any significant change in the strategic environment that materially affects its premises.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FORCE PLANNING METHODOLOGY: NEEDS-BASED CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

4.1 The Logic of Needs-Based Force Planning

The methodology for connecting strategic guidance to specific force structure decisions is one of the most technically demanding elements of defense policy drafting, and one of the most important for ensuring that the defense budget produces genuine security capability rather than institutional acquisition without strategic purpose. This chapter develops the needs-based force

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

planning methodology that should govern Bangladesh's force structure decisions, including the specific analytical steps that connect threat assessment to capability requirement, capability requirement to force structure choice, and force structure choice to resource allocation.

The foundational document in the methodology of needs-based force planning is the British MoD's Defence Planning Assumptions framework, which in its various iterations since the 1990s has attempted to specify the operational scenarios that the defence establishment must be capable of addressing, derive the capability requirements from those scenarios, and connect capability requirements to specific force elements through a structured analytical process. The 2021 UK Integrated Review and the 2023 Integrated Review Refresh represent the most recent evolution of this methodology, incorporating a broader multi-domain approach that connects traditional military capability requirements with cyber, space, and information capabilities in a unified planning framework.

Australia's Defence Strategic Review 2023 added an important innovation to this methodology in the form of the concept of impactful projection: the principle that Australia's defence capability should be designed not merely to defend Australian territory but to present an adversary with credible costs at distance, creating a deterrent effect that operates before any conflict reaches Australian shores. This concept is directly transferable to Bangladesh's context, where the Three-Domain Denial concept articulated in the draft White Paper is essentially a needs-based derivation of the same principle: Bangladesh's deterrent credibility requires capabilities that can impose costs on an adversary before, during, and beyond the immediate border area.

The specific steps in needs-based force planning for Bangladesh are as follows. Step one is threat characterization: for each identified threat, the assessment must specify the nature of the threat (the type of military force or non-state capability that could threaten Bangladesh), the likely operational approach (how that force would be employed against Bangladesh's interests), the timeline (how quickly the threat could materialize), and the geographic focus (which aspects of Bangladesh's territory or maritime space are most at risk). Step two is mission derivation: from the threat characterization, the specific military missions that the Bangladesh Armed Forces must be capable of performing are derived. Step three is capability requirement: from the mission set, the specific military capabilities required are identified, specified in functional terms rather than platform terms at this stage. Step four is force element choice: from the functional capability requirement, the specific force elements, platform types, and system configurations that can deliver the required capability are identified, with comparative cost-effectiveness analysis. Step five is resource allocation: from the force element choices, the specific resource requirements over the planning period are calculated, and the resource plan is developed that delivers the required capability within available and committed resources.

4.2 Necessity-Based Assessment of Bangladesh's Major Procurement Decisions

Applying the needs-based force planning methodology to Bangladesh's actual procurement decisions in the current period provides a productive test of both the methodology and the decisions themselves.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The J-10CE Fighter Aircraft Procurement. The procurement of twenty J-10CE multirole fighters from China, negotiated during the interim government period, must be assessed against the need it is designed to address. The Bangladesh Air Force's aging F-7 fleet is obsolescent and must be replaced. The replacement must provide genuine air intercept capability, some measure of precision strike capacity, and sufficient training and maintenance supportability to sustain operational readiness over a fifteen to twenty-year service life. The J-10CE, a capable fourth-generation-plus aircraft with active electronically scanned array radar, beyond-visual-range missile capability, and mature support infrastructure, meets the basic operational requirements. The concerns are supply chain dependency on China for engines, avionics, and weapons, the strategic signal of an air force equipped entirely with Chinese combat aircraft, and the question of whether the negotiated price and offset arrangements represent genuine value for money. The necessity assessment supports the procurement in principle while identifying the negotiating priorities: maximizing technology transfer and local maintenance capability, obtaining a robust spare parts and ammunition supply agreement, and ensuring the contract terms are fully disclosed to the parliamentary oversight framework.

The South Korean KSS-I Submarine Procurement. The negotiation for six improved Korean submarines represents a strategically important diversification of Bangladesh's submarine capability from its current Chinese platform base. The necessity is clear: two aging Ming-class submarines provide inadequate patrol coverage of Bangladesh's extensive EEZ, and the deterrent value of a submarine force diminishes as its size and capability are reduced by age and availability challenges. Korean-origin submarines bring a different maintenance ecosystem, greater interoperability with Western partner navies through Korean compatibility standards, and a supply chain that is not subject to Chinese leverage. The necessity assessment strongly supports this procurement as meeting both the operational requirement and the strategic goal of procurement diversification.

The ACSA and GSOMIA Defense Agreements with the United States. This is the most consequential defense policy decision facing the BNP government in its early months. The necessity assessment requires asking, with full analytical honesty, what specific security benefit Bangladesh would derive from each agreement, what the costs in terms of strategic autonomy, Chinese reaction, and operational constraint would be, and whether the benefit justifies the cost.

For ACSA, the specific operational benefit is logistical flexibility in joint exercises, peacekeeping operations, and humanitarian missions where interoperability with American forces would provide efficiency gains. This is a genuine but modest benefit, given that Bangladesh already cooperates effectively with American forces in Operation Pacific Angel and other exercises without a formal ACSA in place. The cost is the possibility, not the certainty but the genuine risk, that ACSA's provisions for logistical support are eventually used to enable American military operations through Bangladeshi facilities in a regional conflict scenario that Bangladesh has no interest in joining. The necessity assessment supports pursuing a limited, carefully drafted logistical cooperation agreement that provides the operational benefits while containing the escalation risks, specifically through the explicit prohibitions on combat operations support and the no-foreign-bases clause identified in the NSS chapter.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

For GSOMIA, the specific operational benefit is access to American military technology that currently requires a security of information assurance before it can be transferred. American advanced fighter aircraft, long-range surveillance radars, and certain maritime systems would become available through GSOMIA channels that are not currently accessible. The cost is the intelligence sovereignty risk identified above: GSOMIA frameworks typically require synchronization of intelligence architecture with American standards and can create pressure to share intelligence about third parties, including China, that Bangladesh would prefer to manage through its own sovereign intelligence decisions. The necessity assessment supports pursuing a carefully scoped GSOMIA that is limited to the specific technology access it enables and that explicitly prohibits the use of the agreement's information-sharing provisions as a vehicle for intelligence operations against third countries in which Bangladesh does not choose to participate.

4.3 Needs-Based Assessment of the NCP Manifesto Defense Proposals

The National Citizen Party's January 2026 election manifesto included several defense proposals that provide an additional set of policy options for needs-based assessment. The NCP proposed establishing a UAV Brigade in the Bangladesh Army, expanding reserve forces, and reforming the intelligence sector through a clear legal framework for DGFI operations and parliamentary oversight of intelligence agencies.

The UAV Brigade proposal is strongly supported by the needs-based assessment. Unmanned aerial vehicles have become one of the most operationally significant military capabilities of the contemporary battlefield, demonstrated dramatically in Ukraine, in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, and in multiple Middle Eastern conflicts. For Bangladesh, UAVs provide surveillance capability for border monitoring, maritime patrol, and battlefield awareness at costs substantially below manned aircraft, while also providing a precision strike option that creates asymmetric deterrent value. The CETC drone manufacturing joint venture and the potential acquisition of Bayraktar TB2 and TB3 systems from Turkey both contribute to this capability. A dedicated UAV Brigade would provide the organizational framework to develop UAV doctrine, training, and operational integration that isolated UAV capabilities cannot deliver.

The intelligence sector reform proposals, including a clear legal framework for DGFI operations and parliamentary monitoring through standing committees, are fully aligned with the needs-based governance assessment developed throughout this textbook. They are not merely governance improvements: they are security investments that reduce the political and reputational risks created by an intelligence apparatus that operates outside the rule of law.

CHAPTER FIVE: DRAFTING BILATERAL DEFENSE AGREEMENTS: FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

5.1 The Architecture of Bilateral Defense Agreements

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bilateral defense agreements are the legal instruments through which states formalize specific aspects of their defense relationships, creating binding obligations about what each party will do, what information and resources it will share, and what constraints it accepts on its behavior in return for the benefits the agreement provides. For Bangladesh, navigating the rapidly proliferating set of bilateral defense agreement requests from multiple major powers, including the American ACSA and GSOMIA, Turkish defense cooperation frameworks, Chinese comprehensive partnership agreements, and Korean procurement arrangements, requires a principled framework that determines what Bangladesh should and should not agree to and on what terms.

The principled framework proposed here rests on four criteria derived from the strategic concept and national interests articulated in the draft NSS. First, sovereignty preservation: the agreement must not constrain Bangladesh's ability to make sovereign decisions about its foreign and security policy, including the ability to maintain relationships with multiple partners simultaneously. Second, security benefit: the agreement must provide Bangladesh with specific, documented, and genuine security benefits that it cannot obtain through alternative means at comparable cost. Third, strategic balance: the agreement must not, in its specific terms or in its predictable consequences, create such a degree of dependency on or alignment with one major power that Bangladesh's non-aligned posture becomes functionally or formally untenable. Fourth, democratic accountability: the terms of the agreement, including its principal commitments and any conditions attached to it, must be disclosed to Parliament within a defined period of signing, enabling democratic scrutiny of the strategic choice the agreement represents.

5.2 Draft Framework for Bangladesh's ACSA Negotiating Position

Based on the needs-based assessment of ACSA's costs and benefits, the following negotiating framework provides specific guidance for Bangladesh's negotiators in the event that the Rahman government decides to pursue ACSA negotiations with the United States.

The Bangladesh delegation should seek a treaty text that includes the following elements. First, a scope limitation clause that restricts the agreement's application to specific activities: joint training exercises, UN peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster response, and routine defense cooperation including port visits and maintenance support. The agreement should explicitly exclude the provision of logistics support for any American combat operation in any conflict in which Bangladesh has not explicitly and individually decided to participate.

Second, a no-permanent-presence clause that explicitly prohibits the establishment of any permanent American military presence, including personnel, equipment, or facilities, on Bangladeshi territory, sea areas under Bangladesh's jurisdiction, or in Bangladeshi airspace. The clause should define permanent presence to include any rotational deployment that exceeds a cumulative duration of thirty days per quarter, to prevent the use of temporary rotations as a mechanism for establishing de facto permanent presence.

Third, an explicit prohibition on combat infrastructure use, specifying that no Bangladeshi airfield, port, fuel depot, or communications facility covered by the agreement may be used by American forces for any combat sortie or combat support operation in any third country,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

including resupply or refueling of aircraft or vessels that have conducted or are preparing to conduct combat operations, unless Bangladesh has individually and specifically authorized that specific operation through its sovereign decision-making process.

Fourth, a most-favored-partner clause specifying that Bangladesh may simultaneously maintain equivalent or greater logistical cooperation arrangements with other partner states, including China, and that ACSA does not create any exclusive relationship or any obligation for Bangladesh to limit its defense relationships with other states.

Fifth, a parliamentary disclosure requirement in the agreement text itself, acknowledging that Bangladesh's constitutional and legislative framework requires disclosure of the agreement's terms to Parliament within sixty days of entry into force, and that the American party accepts this disclosure obligation as part of the agreement.

5.3 Draft Framework for Bangladesh's GSOMIA Negotiating Position

The GSOMIA negotiating position requires similar principled architecture. The core challenge in GSOMIA negotiations is that the United States has standard text that it uses across multiple agreements and is typically reluctant to make substantial modifications, because consistency across its GSOMIA network is itself a security interest. Bangladesh's leverage in the negotiation is its geographic strategic value and the attractiveness of the defense market access that the American side is offering. That leverage should be used to obtain specific text modifications that protect Bangladesh's sovereignty interests.

The key modifications Bangladesh should seek include a scope limitation to information directly related to the specific technology transfer that GSOMIA is intended to enable, rather than a general intelligence sharing obligation. The agreement should not require Bangladesh to share intelligence assessments, order-of-battle information, or signals intelligence about third countries with the United States as a routine matter under the agreement's terms. Any intelligence Bangladesh chooses to share should be shared on a case-by-case sovereign decision basis, with explicit Bangladesh control over what is shared, with whom it may be further shared, and for what purposes it may be used.

A sovereignty of intelligence assessment clause should be included, affirming that Bangladesh's intelligence agencies retain full sovereign authority over their analytical judgments and assessments, and that GSOMIA does not create any obligation for Bangladesh to synchronize its intelligence assessments with American assessments or to incorporate American threat assessments into Bangladesh's own intelligence products. Bangladesh will form its own sovereign judgments about the security environment.

A non-application-to-third-party-operations clause should specify that information shared under GSOMIA may not be used by the American party to plan, support, or conduct operations against or in relation to any third country without Bangladesh's specific sovereign consent to that specific use.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: THE INSTITUTIONAL MACHINERY FOR DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING

6.1 The National Security Council Secretariat: Organization and Mandate

The drafting and maintenance of Bangladesh's defense policy documents requires a permanent institutional home in the national security architecture. The National Security Council, proposed in both the BNP's defense manifesto and in the Constitution Reform Commission's recommendations, provides the political apex of this architecture. But the NSC's effectiveness depends on a professional secretariat that provides the analytical capability, the interagency coordination, and the document management functions that translate NSC political direction into coherent policy output.

The NSC Secretariat should be organized with a civil-military composition that reflects its cross-domain mandate. The Secretariat head, equivalent to a National Security Adviser, should be a senior civilian official with broad national security expertise, reporting directly to the Prime Minister and serving as the day-to-day coordinator of national security policy across the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, home affairs, finance, and other relevant departments. The Secretariat should include directorate-level divisions covering the full range of national security domains: military affairs, intelligence coordination, foreign and strategic policy, economic security, cyber and information security, and climate and non-traditional security.

The analytical function of the Secretariat is its most important contribution to the defense policy drafting process. The Secretariat should be able to commission and review intelligence assessments, to request and evaluate military capability analyses from the armed forces, to review procurement proposals against strategic criteria, and to maintain the running strategic assessment of the external environment that provides the factual basis for NSS and White Paper updates. This analytical function requires a professional cadre of security analysts with academic training in international relations, security studies, and related disciplines, combined with experience in government policy processes. Bangladesh currently lacks this cadre, and its development is a human capital investment priority for the defense policy reform agenda.

6.2 The Strategic Studies Infrastructure: Think Tanks, Universities, and Policy Communities

The quality of Bangladesh's defense policy documents depends not only on the institutional machinery within government but on the broader strategic studies ecosystem that provides the analytical talent, the independent critical engagement, and the ideas that government processes can draw on. Comparative experience across functioning democracies demonstrates that the states that produce the best defense policy are those with vibrant strategic studies communities that are independent of government but engaged with it: think tanks that produce rigorous analysis of security issues, universities that train the next generation of security analysts, and policy journals and forums that provide platforms for debate and deliberation.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's strategic studies infrastructure is underdeveloped relative to the complexity of the security challenges it faces. The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies provides research and policy analysis, but its institutional connection to the government limits its independence and therefore its credibility as a source of critical engagement with government policy. The Bangladesh military's own research and education institutions, particularly the National Defence College and the Defence Services Command and Staff College, produce excellent professional military education but are not optimally positioned to produce the kind of open, academically rigorous strategic analysis that democracy requires.

The development of an independent strategic studies ecosystem requires both institutional investment and the cultural change that allows genuinely critical engagement with defense policy to be welcomed rather than suppressed. Government funding for independent research, through competitive grant mechanisms that do not give the funding ministry control over research conclusions, is one established mechanism. The development of defense and security studies programs at Bangladeshi universities, connected to international academic networks, is another. The creation of forums for open public deliberation about defense policy, modeled on the Australian Strategic Policy Institute or the Royal United Services Institute in the United Kingdom, would provide a platform for the kind of sustained, evidence-based public debate about defense choices that democratic security governance requires.

6.3 The Role of Parliament in Defense Policy Deliberation

Parliament's role in defense policy is not only oversight and appropriations, as analyzed in Part Seven, but deliberation. The quality of defense policy is improved when it is subjected to genuine parliamentary engagement that brings diverse perspectives, interests, and values to bear on strategic choices that affect the entire population. Parliamentary debate about defense white papers, about major procurement decisions, about alliance commitments and bilateral agreements, and about the security sector governance reforms proposed throughout this textbook provides a form of democratic quality assurance that no internal government process can replicate.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense, strengthened in the ways proposed in Part Seven, should take an active role in commissioning independent analysis of major defense policy proposals, holding hearings at which military and civilian officials, academic experts, and civil society representatives can provide testimony, and publishing reports that provide a parliamentary assessment of defense policy options that Parliament can take into its deliberations. This active committee role requires both the statutory powers and the professional staff capability analyzed in the legislative reform chapter, and it requires the cultural change within the parliament itself that treats defense policy as a matter of genuine democratic concern rather than an executive privilege.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SEVEN: DRAFTING FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY: COMMUNICATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The Defense Policy Communication Challenge

Defense policy documents, however analytically excellent, fail their democratic purpose if they are not accessible to the public whose security they are designed to protect and whose resources they are proposing to allocate. The communication of defense policy is therefore not an add-on to the drafting process but an integral part of it: the drafting must take into account how the document will be communicated, what the key messages are for different audiences, and how genuine public understanding of the choices being made can be developed.

Bangladesh's defense communication challenge has several specific dimensions. The defense budget debate, such as it is, is dominated by aggregate numbers rather than by substantive engagement with what the money is being spent on and why. The major procurement decisions that shape Bangladesh's military capability for decades are announced and defended in terms that do not enable public evaluation of the strategic logic or the value for money. The bilateral defense agreements that define Bangladesh's strategic relationships are negotiated without public deliberation about the trade-offs they involve. And the security sector reform agenda that emerged from the July Revolution has proceeded without the kind of sustained public communication that would build the constituency for genuinely difficult institutional changes.

A defense communication strategy should accompany the publication of both the NSS and the Defense White Paper, organized around several key messages tailored to different audiences. For the general public, the key messages are the honest assessment of Bangladesh's security environment, the strategy for addressing it, and the specific claims on public resources that the strategy requires. For Parliament, the key messages are the specific policy choices the documents embed, the resource commitments they involve, and the accountability mechanisms through which the government can be held to deliver on its commitments. For Bangladesh's international partners, the key messages are the principled basis of Bangladesh's defense policy, its commitment to non-alignment and sovereign decision-making, and the specific areas where cooperation is welcomed and the specific areas where Bangladesh's sovereignty requires protection.

7.2 The Controversy of Strategic Transparency: What to Disclose and What to Protect

Every democracy that has grappled with the defense policy communication challenge has confronted the tension between transparency and security: the more transparent the defense policy, the more vulnerable specific capabilities and plans may be to adversary exploitation, but the less transparent the policy, the more difficult meaningful democratic accountability becomes. The resolution of this tension requires both principled criteria and practical wisdom.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The principled criteria for classification decisions in the defense policy domain can be drawn from the harm-based approach to secrecy that several democracies have adopted in recent years. Information should be classified when and only when its disclosure would create specific, identifiable, and serious harm to Bangladesh's national security interests, such harm being defined with reasonable precision rather than by broad reference to anything that anyone in the security establishment prefers not to disclose. The categories of information meeting this standard include specific military operational plans, intelligence sources and methods, details of cryptographic capabilities and limitations, specific force employment concepts that would enable adversary countermeasures, and specific individual identities in intelligence contexts.

The categories of information that do not meet the harm standard, and that should therefore be disclosed in public defense policy documents, include the broad strategic framework within which force planning occurs, the general capability areas being developed and the strategic rationale for developing them, the resource framework within which the defense program is operating, the governance and accountability mechanisms that apply to the defense establishment, and the general principles governing Bangladesh's bilateral defense relationships. Applying this harm-based standard consistently would result in defense policy documents that are substantially more transparent than current practice while remaining genuinely protective of information whose disclosure would create real security risks.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SPECIAL TOPICS IN DEFENSE POLICY DRAFTING

8.1 Drafting for Non-Traditional Security Threats: Climate, Cyber, and Hybrid Warfare

The most significant innovation required in Bangladesh's defense policy drafting is the integration of non-traditional security threats into the policy framework in ways that are analytically rigorous and operationally meaningful rather than merely rhetorical. Climate security, cyber security, and hybrid warfare threats require defense policy engagement that goes beyond the traditional military capability planning framework, because they involve instruments, institutions, and timelines that do not map directly onto the conventional force planning methodology.

Climate security integration requires that defense policy documents acknowledge climate change as a fundamental driver of the security environment and specify what the defense establishment's specific contribution to climate security is, as distinct from the broader government response to climate change. The defense establishment's climate-relevant functions include disaster response capacity that must be sized and positioned to deal with increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, coastal and maritime monitoring that supports Blue Economy management in a changing ocean, and planning for the security implications of climate-driven displacement that could eventually involve millions of people. The defense white paper and force

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

planning documents should include specific capability requirements derived from the climate security assessment rather than treating climate as a vague background concern.

Cyber security integration in defense policy documents is complicated by the dual nature of cyber threats as both a technical problem requiring specific technical solutions and a strategic problem requiring strategic responses. At the technical level, military command and control systems, weapons platforms with digital components, base infrastructure, and communications networks all require hardening against sophisticated cyber attack by state and non-state actors. At the strategic level, the potential for cyber operations to be used as instruments of coercion below the threshold of armed conflict, as demonstrated in the documented cases of Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and North Korean cyber operations against the critical infrastructure of states they seek to pressure, requires defensive cyber capabilities that go beyond technical hardening to include attribution capability, response options, and deterrence signaling.

Hybrid warfare in the defense policy document context requires acknowledgment of the fact that potential adversaries may seek to achieve strategic objectives through combinations of military and non-military pressure, including information operations, economic coercion, support to disruptive non-state actors, and calibrated conventional military pressure, all applied below the threshold that would trigger conventional military response. Bangladesh's vulnerability to hybrid approaches, given its political polarization, its economic vulnerabilities, and its information environment, is significant and should be honestly assessed in the threat section of both the NSS and the Defense White Paper.

8.2 Drafting for Alliance and Partnership Management

Defense policy documents must address alliance and partnership management with the same analytical rigor applied to capability planning, because the political and diplomatic context of Bangladesh's security relationships directly affects what capabilities Bangladesh needs to maintain, what deterrence signals it can send, and what resources it can access.

The specific challenge for Bangladesh in 2026, as analyzed throughout this textbook, is managing a web of relationships with multiple major powers that have competing strategic interests while maintaining Bangladesh's sovereign ability to set its own priorities. Defense policy documents must be drafted with awareness of how they will be read by each of Bangladesh's major partners: China will read them for signals about whether Bangladesh is moving away from the comprehensive strategic partnership; India will read them for signals about whether Bangladesh is genuinely committed to the bilateral security cooperation that India's own security interests require; the United States will read them for signals about whether Bangladesh is prepared to align more closely with American Indo-Pacific strategy; Turkey will read them for signals about whether the deepening defense partnership will continue. Managing these competing readings requires conscious and sophisticated communication strategy.

The approach recommended is what might be called principled consistency: stating Bangladesh's principles clearly and applying them consistently across all bilateral relationships, so that no partner can reasonably accuse Bangladesh of applying different standards to different relationships. If Bangladesh tells China that its defense relationships with Turkey and the United

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

States do not represent a strategic reorientation away from the China partnership, and if Bangladesh tells the United States that its defense relationships with China and Turkey reflect its non-aligned posture rather than a specific alignment with Chinese strategy, both statements must be demonstrably true and must be reflected in the specific commitments Bangladesh makes in each relationship. The draft NSS text in Chapter Two above provides the framework for this principled consistency, and the ACSA and GSOMIA negotiating positions in Chapter Five demonstrate how it is applied in specific bilateral contexts.

CONCLUSION TO PART EIGHT: DRAFTING AS A DEMOCRATIC ACT

The analysis and the specific draft documents developed across this Part converge on a conclusion that is simultaneously about the craft of policy writing and about the character of democratic governance. Drafting a national security strategy, a defense white paper, or a force planning document is not a technical exercise conducted by security professionals for the benefit of other security professionals. It is a democratic act: the formal articulation of how the state proposes to use the coercive and diplomatic instruments of national power in the name of the people whose security it is responsible for providing.

As a democratic act, defense policy drafting carries the obligations that democracy imposes on all exercises of public power: the obligation to be honest about costs and benefits rather than systematically optimistic about the former and dismissive about the latter; the obligation to be transparent about choices and their consequences rather than obscuring difficult trade-offs in bureaucratic language; the obligation to be accountable through processes that give Parliament and the public genuine information on which to exercise genuine judgment; and the obligation to be responsive to the democratic deliberation that these processes enable.

Bangladesh's history of defense policy has been characterized by the systematic violation of these obligations: opacity about costs, evasion of accountability, indifference to public deliberation, and institutional capture of policy by interests that do not represent the full range of stakeholders in Bangladesh's security. The July Revolution created the political conditions for change. The reform agenda developed across the eight parts of this textbook has provided the substantive content for that change. Part Eight has provided the drafting methodology and the specific document frameworks through which that change can be made operational.

The remaining eight parts of this textbook will address the specific domains that have been introduced but not fully developed in Parts One through Eight: the defense industrial policy in its full complexity, the internal security dimensions, the civil-military relations reform agenda, the environmental and climate security integration, the specific force development priorities for each service arm, the special topics of counterterrorism and non-state actor threats, the human rights framework for security operations, and the synthesis into a comprehensive defense policy reform roadmap for Bangladesh through 2040. Each of these Parts will build on the foundational

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

analysis developed in Parts One through Eight, and together they will constitute the most comprehensive academic treatment of Bangladesh's defense policy challenge ever produced.

Part Nine will address the internal security framework: the management of non-state violence, the counter-extremism strategy, the Chittagong Hill Tracts special situation, and the integration of internal and external security in Bangladesh's comprehensive security architecture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART EIGHT

Defense Policy Drafting Methodology

Gray, Colin. Modern Strategy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Gray, Colin. The Future of Strategy. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.

National War College. A National Security Strategy Primer. Washington: National Defense University, 2025.

The White House. National Security Strategy of the United States of America, November 2025.

United States Department of Defense. 2026 National Defense Strategy. Washington: DoD, January 2026.

CSIS. The 2026 National Defense Strategy by the Numbers. January 28, 2026.

Brands, Hal. What Good Is Grand Strategy? Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Bangladesh-Specific Policy Documents and Analysis

BNP Outlines Plan to Reshape Armed Forces and Develop Indigenous Defence Industry. bdmilitary.com, February 6, 2026.

BNP's Defence Imperative. bdmilitary.com, February 13, 2026.

Ideal Defence Policy for Bangladesh by 2040. bdmilitary.com, April-June 2025.

Mapping Bangladesh's Defence Future. The Daily Star, April 2026.

NCP Manifesto Proposes UAV Brigade, Expanded Reserves and Intelligence Sector Reforms. bdmilitary.com, January 31, 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Rethinking Bangladesh's National Defense Policy in the Wake of the Students-People's Uprising. Ahmad M. Dipu, SSRN, February 2025.

ACSA and GSOMIA: Policy Analysis

Bangladesh at a Strategic Crossroads: US Military Engagement as Counterbalance to China. bdmilitary.com, October 2025.

Bangladesh First? The Choices Defining Tarique Rahman's Foreign Policy. South Asian Voices, March 2026.

Dhaka Must Tread Cautiously on Routine Defense Agreements with the US. The Diplomat, March 2026.

Trump Urges Bangladesh to Finalise Key Defence Agreements Amid Expanding Strategic Ties. bdmilitary.com, February 19, 2026.

US-Bangladesh Defence Pacts Risk Intelligence Sovereignty. New Kerala, March 2026.

What Paul Kapur's Dhaka Visit Means for Bangladesh's Strategic Future. Blitz, March 2026.

Bangladesh at a Strategic Crossroads: The Debate Over US Military Agreements. Blitz, March 2026.

Comparative Strategic Documents

Australia. 2023 Defence Strategic Review. Canberra: Department of Defence, 2023.

India. Defence Planning Assumptions Framework. Ministry of Defence, New Delhi.

United Kingdom. Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. London: HMSO, 2021, and Integrated Review Refresh 2023.

Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: DND, 2017.

Japan. National Security Strategy 2022. Tokyo: Cabinet Secretariat, 2022.

US National Security Strategy November 2025: Implications for Bangladesh, Indo-Pacific. Dhaka Tribune, December 2025.

Navigating Great Power Rivalry: What Does the New US National Security Mean for Bangladesh? Eurasia Review, December 2025.

End of Part Eight

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Nine will address the internal security dimensions of Bangladesh's comprehensive security architecture, examining the management of non-state violence, the counter-extremism strategy and its legal framework, the special security situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the integration of domestic and external security functions, and the philosophical and jurisprudential framework for distinguishing legitimate security operations from the abusive internal security practices that the July Revolution placed at the center of Bangladesh's reform agenda.

Part Nine: Internal Security Architecture, Non-State Violence, Counter-Extremism, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the Jurisprudence of Legitimate Force

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART NINE

There is a powerful temptation, when writing about national defense policy, to concentrate almost exclusively on external threats: the armies of neighboring states, the naval forces contesting maritime boundaries, the aircraft that might one day contest Bangladesh's airspace, the missiles and submarines and electronic warfare systems that populate the vocabularies of conventional military planning. Parts One through Eight of this textbook have devoted substantial attention to these external dimensions, and rightly so: Bangladesh's external security environment is genuinely complex and demanding, pressing on all sides with historical grievances, active conflicts, and the great power competition that is reshaping the entire Indo-Pacific strategic landscape.

But defense policy that ignores internal security is defense policy built on a foundation of deliberate blindness. No external threat has ever been as immediately destructive to Bangladesh's state capacity, social cohesion, economic development, or democratic governance as the internal security challenges the country faces and has faced throughout its history. The Liberation War itself began as an internal security crisis. Every military coup that interrupted Bangladesh's democratic development, and there were several, was an internal security event. The Chittagong Hill Tracts insurgency that claimed thousands of lives over nearly three decades was an internal conflict. The rise of Islamist militancy that produced the Holey Artisan Bakery massacre of July 2016 was an internal security failure, however much its ideological roots stretched across international borders. The July Revolution of 2024 that brought down fifteen years of Awami League governance was, whatever its ultimate historical significance, an internal political and security earthquake of the first order.

Part Nine confronts the internal security dimension of Bangladesh's comprehensive defense architecture with the same intellectual seriousness, analytical depth, and jurisprudential scrutiny

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that the preceding parts have brought to external threats and defense policy drafting methodology. The stakes of getting internal security policy right are not abstract: they are measured in the lives of citizens, the integrity of democratic institutions, the protection of minority rights, the accountability of security forces, and the long-term stability of the state itself.

The chapters that follow examine the conceptual framework for understanding internal security in democratic theory; the historical trajectory of Bangladesh's internal security challenges from independence through the present; the specific and enormously complex situation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts; the counter-extremism architecture and its recent fragmentation; the Rohingya security nexus and its ramifications for the internal security environment; the police and paramilitary forces as instruments of both security and potential repression; the legislative framework governing internal security operations; and the deep jurisprudential questions about when state violence against its own population is legitimate and when it constitutes criminal abuse of power.

These are not comfortable questions. They cannot be answered with the certainty that simple doctrines offer. But they are the questions that any serious defense policy for Bangladesh must answer honestly.

CHAPTER ONE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNAL SECURITY IN DEMOCRATIC STATES

1.1 The Distinction Between Internal and External Security: A False Dichotomy?

The classical distinction between internal and external security rests on a sharp conceptual line: external security concerns threats originating outside the territorial borders of the state, while internal security concerns threats originating within those borders. This distinction is operationally convenient because it allocates institutional responsibilities cleanly: the military handles external threats, the police handle internal ones, and the two functions are kept strictly separate in the interest of both civil liberties and operational efficiency.

This convenient distinction has, however, always been a simplification, and in the contemporary security environment it has become an increasingly inaccurate description of reality. The threats that matter most to Bangladesh's security, as this Part will demonstrate in detail, do not respect the internal-external boundary. Islamist extremist networks in Bangladesh are connected to global ideological movements and, in some cases, to specific foreign state actors that provide financing, training, and ideological direction. The Kuki-Chin National Front operating in the Chittagong Hill Tracts maintains organizational connections with similarly named groups in Myanmar and India. Rohingya armed groups operating in the camps of Cox's Bazar draw on financing and support networks that stretch through the Gulf states and Southeast Asia. Drug trafficking networks that corrupt police and border security officials are transnational enterprises.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Cyberthreats to Bangladesh's financial infrastructure and government communications originate from sources both domestic and foreign.

The conceptual framework most useful for Bangladesh's internal security architecture is therefore not one that rigidly separates internal from external security but one that integrates them within a comprehensive understanding of the threats Bangladesh faces, the instruments available to address those threats, and the constitutional and legal constraints that must govern any exercise of state power against persons within Bangladesh's jurisdiction, regardless of the nationality of those persons or the origins of the threat they represent.

This integrated framework has theoretical support in what Barry Buzan described as the "security complex," a set of states and other actors whose security concerns are so interlinked that their individual security cannot realistically be considered apart from one another. The Bangladesh security complex extends inward to encompass the internal fault lines of ethnicity, religion, and class, and outward to encompass Myanmar, India, and the broader Indo-Pacific competition. Separating these levels analytically is useful; treating them as operationally independent would be dangerous.

1.2 The Sociology of Internal Threats: Types, Origins, and Dynamics

Internal security threats are not a homogeneous category. They range from organized political violence seeking to overthrow or fundamentally alter the state, through ethnic and communal violence rooted in historical grievances and demographic competition, to criminal violence that is apolitical in motivation but deeply destabilizing in effect, to the slow violence of structural inequality and state failure that does not manifest in dramatic single events but erodes social cohesion over time.

Understanding the specific type of internal threat is essential to developing an appropriate response, because the instruments appropriate to one type of threat are often counterproductive when applied to another. Military operations may be appropriate against an organized armed group that has demonstrated both the capability and the intent to use violence against the state and its citizens; the same military operations applied against a population protesting political grievances will radicalize that population, recruit new members for exactly the violent groups the operations were intended to suppress, and generate the international condemnation that weakens Bangladesh's diplomatic position and constrains the external partnerships that its security requires.

The theoretical literature on internal security distinguishes between insurgencies, which are organized, politically motivated armed challenges to state authority that aim to control territory and ultimately the state itself; terrorism, which is the use of violence or the threat of violence against civilians or non-combatants to achieve political objectives by generating fear in a wider audience beyond the immediate victims; communal violence, which is collective violence organized along ethnic, religious, or other identity lines, often triggered by specific incidents but rooted in deeper structural tensions; criminal violence, which includes organized crime, drug trafficking, and the various forms of predation that undermine public order without seeking political transformation; and state violence, which includes the abuses perpetrated by security

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

forces themselves, ranging from individual misconduct to systematic patterns of torture, extrajudicial killing, enforced disappearance, and the use of security legislation as a tool of political repression.

Bangladesh's internal security environment encompasses all five of these categories, sometimes simultaneously and in the same geographic area. Understanding this complexity is the prerequisite for designing a security architecture that is both effective and accountable.

1.3 Democratic Theory and Internal Security: The Problem of the State Against Itself

Democratic theory has always struggled with the problem of internal security because internal security by definition involves the exercise of state power against some of the state's own members. The philosophical traditions reviewed in Part One of this textbook offer different frameworks for thinking about this problem, and none of them fully resolves the tension.

John Locke's framework, which grounds the legitimacy of government in its protection of natural rights, implies that the state can legitimately use force against those who violate the rights of others, including through organized violence, terrorism, or criminal predation. But Locke's framework also implies a strict limit: when the state itself becomes the primary violator of natural rights, through systematic torture, disappearance, or political persecution, it has forfeited its legitimacy and the people retain the right of resistance. This Lockean framework is directly relevant to Bangladesh, where the history of security forces abusing their powers, most dramatically under Operation Clean Heart in 2002-2003, the practice of "crossfire" killings, and the widespread use of security legislation against political opponents, makes the question of the state's own lawfulness a central element of any internal security analysis.

Rousseau's general will framework raises a different set of questions: who determines what internal security threats require coercive response, and who speaks for the general will in making that determination? Bangladesh's experience suggests that governments across the political spectrum have been willing to define their political opponents as security threats and to use security legislation to suppress legitimate political activity. The question of who controls the definition of "security threat" is therefore not merely academic but operationally crucial.

Hannah Arendt, writing in the mid-twentieth century about totalitarianism and political violence, offered an insight that is directly relevant to Bangladesh's situation: that the most dangerous internal security threat is not the one posed by organized oppositions, however violent, but the one posed by states that transform their security apparatuses into instruments of political control and thereby hollow out the democratic character of the very state the security forces are nominally protecting. Arendt's analysis suggests that the primary risk to Bangladesh's long-term security is not external military attack or even domestic terrorism but the perennial temptation of rulers to use security powers to entrench their own authority rather than to protect the constitutional order.

The contemporary democratic theory of security governance, developed by scholars such as Philip Stenning, Ian Loader, and Neil Walker in the context of plural policing and democratic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

accountability, argues that the key challenge for modern democracies is not choosing between security and liberty but designing governance arrangements that achieve both simultaneously. This requires institutional design that provides effective oversight of security forces, meaningful accountability for abuses, political independence of operational decision-making, and robust protection of civil liberties in security legislation. Bangladesh's internal security governance, assessed against these criteria, falls well short of democratic standards, not because the ideal is unachievable but because the political will to achieve it has been systematically lacking across all governments since independence.

1.4 The International Legal Framework for Internal Security Operations

Bangladesh's internal security operations are not legally unconstrained. International law imposes significant obligations on how states conduct security operations within their own territory, and Bangladesh has accepted many of these obligations through treaty accession and through customary international law.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh ratified in 2000, prohibits torture, cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and extrajudicial killing under all circumstances, including during states of emergency. The Convention Against Torture, which Bangladesh ratified in 1998, creates absolute obligations not only to refrain from torture but to investigate, prosecute, and punish those who commit it, including members of security forces. The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, while not a binding treaty, represent authoritative international standards requiring that force be used only when strictly necessary, only proportionate to the threat, and only after less drastic alternatives have been exhausted.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which Bangladesh has ratified, applies in non-international armed conflicts, defined broadly as organized armed violence between state forces and organized armed groups or between such groups, and imposes minimum standards of treatment for persons not taking part in hostilities. Whether Bangladesh's operations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts at various points in its history rose to the level of non-international armed conflict, triggering these obligations, is a contested legal question whose analysis this Part addresses in Chapter Three.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 and endorsed by Bangladesh in principle though not ratified as a binding instrument, establishes standards for the treatment of indigenous peoples that are directly relevant to Bangladesh's conduct in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. These standards include the right of indigenous peoples to free, prior, and informed consent before the implementation of measures that affect their lands, territories, and resources; the right to maintain and strengthen their own political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions; and the right to maintain their own security institutions in accordance with their own customs and traditions.

The relationship between these international legal obligations and Bangladesh's domestic security legislation is complex and has been inconsistently managed by successive governments. The jurisprudential analysis of this relationship, examining how international obligations are

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

incorporated into Bangladesh's domestic legal order and whether the Constitution's protections of fundamental rights create justiciable standards against which security operations can be assessed, is developed throughout this Part.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF BANGLADESH'S INTERNAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

2.1 From Liberation to Destabilization: Internal Security in the First Decade

Bangladesh's internal security challenges began almost simultaneously with its birth. The Liberation War of 1971 was not only a war of national liberation against Pakistani military occupation; it was also a civil conflict with significant internal dimensions, including the Razakar and Al-Badr collaborator forces that committed atrocities against the Bengali population, the complex role of the Bihari community whose members had mostly sided with Pakistan and whose status after independence was deeply contested, and the regional and ideological fissures within the liberation movement itself that would generate violent conflict in the years following independence.

The immediate post-liberation period, from 1972 to 1975, was characterized by an internal security environment of extraordinary complexity and violence. The Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, the paramilitary force that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman established under the direct command of the presidency rather than the defense establishment, became within a very short period an instrument of serious human rights abuse, conducting arbitrary arrests, torture, and extra-judicial killings that alienated significant segments of the population and delegitimized the young state in the eyes of many who had fought for its creation. The JRB, whose numbers reached approximately thirty thousand, operated beyond the accountability frameworks that applied to the regular police and military, establishing a template of institutional impunity that would recur throughout Bangladesh's history.

The political violence of this period was not one-directional. The Siraj Shikder-led Sarbahara Party conducted a systematic campaign of political assassinations and armed attacks. The JSD, the radical faction of the student and labor movement that had turned against Mujib's government, engaged in armed activity. And from 1973 onwards, the CHT began to see the first organized resistance from indigenous communities that rejected the incorporation of their homelands into the new Bangladeshi state without meaningful recognition of their distinct political identity.

The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, and the series of coups and counter-coups that followed through November of the same year, demonstrated with brutal clarity that the greatest internal security threat Bangladesh faced in its first decade was not insurgency or terrorism but the willingness of factions within the military itself to use violence to resolve political disputes. The military's entry into politics as an autonomous actor, rather than as

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

an instrument of civilian authority, fundamentally altered the internal security calculus for the next two decades.

2.2 The Militarization of Politics and Its Internal Security Consequences

The periods of direct military rule under Ziaur Rahman (1977-1981) and H.M. Ershad (1982-1990) institutionalized a pattern in which the internal security apparatus, including military intelligence, the police special branch, and various ad hoc surveillance and enforcement mechanisms, was deployed primarily against political opponents rather than genuine security threats. The consequence of this pattern was twofold.

First, the institutional capabilities of the security apparatus were perverted from their legitimate function of protecting the state and its citizens from violence to the illegitimate function of protecting particular rulers from political competition. Intelligence gathering focused on opposition politicians rather than genuine security threats. Police investigative capacity atrophied because its primary function was political surveillance rather than crime investigation. The prosecutorial function of the courts was corrupted by the regular use of false or fabricated cases to detain political opponents. These institutional deformations did not simply reverse themselves when civilian governance was restored in 1990; they persisted as deep structural features of Bangladesh's security architecture that each successive government found it convenient to maintain.

Second, the use of security powers against political opponents rather than genuine threats created the conditions for the actual security threats to develop with less institutional attention than they warranted. The rise of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh from the late 1990s onwards, which had deep roots in the madrassa network that expanded dramatically during the period of Saudi-funded Islamic education promotion, in the ideological spillover from the Afghan jihad, and in the organizational networks created by groups like the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh, occurred in large part because the intelligence and security apparatus was focused on the wrong targets.

The Zia and Ershad periods also established the instrumentalization of Islamist political forces as a counterweight to secular and left-wing opposition, a pattern that had significant long-term consequences for the internal security environment. When state patronage normalized Islamist political mobilization and provided space for the organizational development of Islamist groups, it simultaneously limited the state's ability to distinguish between legitimate religious political activity and the radicalization pipeline that fed into violent extremism.

2.3 The Rise of Islamist Militancy: From Fringe to Strategic Threat

The trajectory of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh from the late 1990s through the Holey Artisan attack of 2016 is one of the most significant internal security histories of the contemporary South Asian region, and it has been extensively documented by scholars including Bertil Lintner, Ali Riaz, and Mubashar Hossain, as well as by international security institutions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The organizational landscape of Bangladeshi Islamist militancy is complex and has evolved considerably over time. The Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), founded in 1992 with connections to the global HuJI network and benefiting from veterans of the Afghan jihad returning to Bangladesh, was the first significant militant organization with a credible capacity for violence. HuJI-B conducted a series of bombings and targeted killings through the late 1990s and early 2000s, including grenade attacks on Awami League rallies, targeted assassination of journalists, and the August 2004 grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina that killed 24 people.

The Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), founded in the late 1990s by Shaykh Abdur Rahman, emerged as a more doctrinally coherent and organizationally disciplined militant group with an explicit goal of establishing an Islamic state through armed violence. The JMB's coordination of synchronized bomb blasts across Bangladesh on August 17, 2005, when 459 small bombs were detonated in 63 of Bangladesh's 64 districts within a period of approximately thirty minutes, was a stunning demonstration of organizational capability that shocked both the Bangladeshi government and the international security community. The subsequent bombing campaign that targeted judicial officials represented a direct challenge to the constitutional order.

The Bangladeshi government's response to the JMB was initially delayed by political considerations, specifically the dependence of the BNP-Jamaat coalition government on Islamist political support, but ultimately effective. Operations in 2006-2007 resulted in the arrest, conviction, and execution of JMB's top leadership, and the organization's operational capacity was severely degraded.

What emerged in the years following was not the elimination of the militant threat but its fragmentation and transformation into a more dispersed, harder-to-detect, and in some respects more dangerous form. Neo-JMB, which absorbed some JMB veterans and acquired an ISIS ideological orientation, represented the most dangerous iteration of this evolution. The Holey Artisan Bakery attack of July 1, 2016, in which a team of five trained operatives seized a restaurant in Dhaka's diplomatic quarter, killed twenty-two people including eighteen foreign nationals, and held off security forces for twelve hours, was the most spectacular and damaging terrorist attack in Bangladesh's history. It demonstrated that Bangladesh had developed, in the Rohingya camps, the madrassa network, and the online radicalization ecosystem, a domestic militant capability connected to global jihadi networks.

The Awami League government's response after the Holey Artisan attack combined genuine operational effectiveness in dismantling Neo-JMB's organizational infrastructure with a political instrumentalization of the counterterrorism framework that compromised its legitimacy. The establishment of the Anti-Terrorism Unit in 2017 as the lead coordinating and investigating body for counterterrorism represented a significant institutional development. But the simultaneous use of the Anti-Terrorism Act against political opponents, including hundreds of BNP activists who were charged with terrorism on the basis of evidence that independent observers found deeply questionable, corroded the institutional credibility of the counterterrorism framework in ways that created lasting damage.

2.4 The Post-July 2024 Security Environment: New Challenges and Old Patterns

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The July Revolution of 2024 dramatically altered Bangladesh's internal security environment in ways that are still working themselves out as of the writing of this Part. The fall of the Awami League government removed the institutional framework within which Bangladesh's counterterrorism apparatus had operated for fifteen years, together with the experienced personnel who had developed the specific operational knowledge and institutional relationships that enabled counterterrorism effectiveness. The consequences were not merely organizational.

The current problem stems from a major policy shift by the interim government, which not only publicly downplayed the threat of terrorism and extremism but also actively disempowered the very agencies meant to combat it. Experienced counterterrorism professionals have been sidelined, dismissed, or transferred to insignificant posts, creating an internal crisis that severely limited these agencies' ability to proactively respond to threats. The Diplomat

The political dynamics that followed the July Revolution created powerful incentives for the interim government to associate counterterrorism with the previous government's abuses and thus to distance itself from the counterterrorism framework as a whole. This association was not entirely unfounded: the Awami League's misuse of terrorism charges against BNP and other opposition figures was real and extensively documented. But the conflation of the abuses of the counterterrorism framework with the counterterrorism function itself created a security vacuum.

Following the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government in 2024, Islamist political groups re-emerged with renewed vigour, including Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, an influential hardline organisation of Qawmi madrassa teachers and students. These groups are now positioning themselves to enter parliament in the 2026 elections, advocating for the implementation of shariah law, including the death penalty for blasphemy. RSIS

The analysis conducted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore in 2025 describes the overall trajectory with precision: from January to May 2025, Bangladesh witnessed a rise in religious extremism, worsened by ongoing political instability, with increased intolerance towards minorities, secular voices, and women's rights, and the growth of hardline groups and mob violence targeting those seen as "un-Islamic" signaling a worsening security situation.

The 2025 amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, which banned the Awami League as an organization and were used to arrest alleged party supporters, represent a continuation of the pattern identified in Section 2.3 above: the use of security legislation as a political weapon against opponents rather than as a genuine instrument of public safety. Human Rights Watch documented these abuses extensively, and the Bangladesh Editors' Council warned that the amendments would curtail freedom of expression in ways that would ultimately harm the country's democratic development.

The BNP government of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman that took office following the 2026 elections inherited this complex and deteriorated internal security environment, with the additional challenge that its own party's history of using Islamist groups as political allies created structural tensions with any genuinely robust counterterrorism agenda.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER THREE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: HISTORY, LAW, AND THE UNFINISHED PEACE

3.1 Historical Origins of the CHT Conflict: From Colonial Exclusion to National Integration

The Chittagong Hill Tracts present what is simultaneously Bangladesh's most persistent internal security challenge, its most complex human rights situation, its most important test of the rule of law in conflict zones, and its most revealing window into the tensions between nation-state building and ethnic plurality that run through South Asian history.

The CHT comprises three districts, Bandarban, Rangamati, and Khagrachari, covering approximately 13,295 square kilometers in the southeastern corner of Bangladesh and bordering both India and Myanmar. The region is home to thirteen distinct indigenous ethnic groups, collectively known as the Jumma peoples, whose languages, cultural practices, and social organization are distinct from those of the Bengali Muslim majority that constitutes the overwhelming majority of Bangladesh's population. The principal groups include the Chakma, the Marma, the Tripura, the Bawm, the Mro, the Khumi, the Khyang, the Lushai, the Pankhua, the Tanchangya, the Riang, and others, each with its own language, traditional governance structures, and relationship to the land.

The colonial history of the CHT begins with its unusual administrative status under British rule. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900, one of colonial India's more elaborately constructed exercises in indirect rule, created a "protected area" status for the CHT that excluded it from the ordinary administrative and legal framework applicable to the rest of Bengal and placed it under the direct authority of a Superintendent, later a Deputy Commissioner, who governed through the medium of traditional chiefs, the circle chiefs of the Chakma, Bohmong, and Mong circles. The 1900 Regulation prohibited the settlement of non-indigenous persons in the CHT without the permission of the relevant authority, protecting the demographic character of the hill tracts in ways that reflected both the colonial government's administrative convenience and the political pressure of hill peoples' organizations.

Partition in 1947 created the first major crisis for the CHT. The region's predominantly non-Muslim indigenous population expected, on the basis of both the demographic logic and the publicly stated partition principles of the Radcliffe Award, to be included in India rather than Pakistan. The radio announcement of August 17, 1947, which assigned the CHT to Pakistan despite these expectations, was greeted with protests and the hoisting of the Indian flag in several CHT towns. This founding wound, the incorporation into Pakistan over the explicit objection of the indigenous population, established the template of contested legitimacy that has never been fully resolved.

Under Pakistani rule, the CHT's special status was progressively eroded. The 1950 East Bengal Land Act began to open CHT land to settlement by non-indigenous persons. The catastrophic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Kaptai Dam project of 1960, which flooded approximately 40 percent of the CHT's most fertile agricultural land, including the former capital of Rangamati town, and displaced an estimated 100,000 people, primarily Chakma, without providing meaningful compensation or rehabilitation, was the most devastating single act of structural violence against the CHT's indigenous communities in the colonial and post-colonial period.

When Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971, the CHT's indigenous leaders, led by Manabendra Narayan Larma, sought a meeting with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to request constitutional recognition of their distinct ethnic identity and a measure of autonomous self-governance. Mujib's reported response, that there would be no "Bengalis and non-Bengalis" in Bangladesh, that everyone must be a Bengali, captured in a phrase the assimilationist logic that the new state would apply to its ethnic minorities and that set the stage for two decades of armed conflict.

3.2 The Armed Conflict: Shanti Bahini, Military Operations, and the Human Costs

The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), founded in 1972 under the leadership of M.N. Larma, created the Shanti Bahini as its armed wing in 1973 in response to what the CHT's indigenous leadership saw as the Bengali state's determination to assimilate and ultimately eliminate the distinct political and cultural identity of the Jumma peoples. The Shanti Bahini began armed operations in 1975, a year that, not coincidentally, also saw the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and the beginning of the military-dominated political era.

The CHT armed conflict that followed from 1975 to the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997 was characterized by the intersection of military operations, demographic transformation, and systematic violations of the rights of indigenous peoples. The military response to the Shanti Bahini insurgency included conventional military operations, the establishment of a network of military camps throughout the CHT, the organization and arming of Bengali settler self-defense groups, and population movement policies that brought large numbers of Bengali settlers into the CHT from the plains districts in what many observers described as a deliberate demographic engineering strategy.

Operation Uttaran, "Rising," replaced the earlier Operation Search Light and became the primary framework for military governance of the CHT for the better part of two decades, continuing formally until 2009 but effectively remaining in place in modified form through the present. This operation placed the CHT under a military governance regime that operated parallel to and effectively superior to the civil administration, with consequences for accountability and rule of law that this chapter addresses in detail.

The human costs of the CHT conflict are contested in terms of precise figures but uncontested in terms of their gravity. Various estimates place the number of people killed during the armed conflict at between 8,000 and 20,000, with the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports of the 1990s documenting patterns of extrajudicial killing, disappearance, torture, and mass displacement that collectively constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Approximately 65,000 Chakma refugees fled to India during the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

conflict, the majority to Tripura state, and remained in refugee camps for more than a decade before their repatriation was negotiated in the mid-1990s.

The Longudu massacre of May 1992, in which security forces and Bengali settlers killed an estimated 200-300 CHT indigenous residents in the Longudu area of Rangamati, and the Logang massacre of April 1992, in which at least 70 Chakma persons were killed by Bengali settlers and security forces in the Khagrachari area, represent among the most serious documented instances of mass violence against indigenous civilians during the conflict period. These events, which were never subjected to credible independent investigation or prosecution, established the pattern of impunity that characterizes the security forces' operations in the CHT to the present day.

3.3 The 1997 CHT Accord: Promise, Implementation, and Failure

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of December 2, 1997, signed between the Government of Bangladesh, led by the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina, and the PCJSS, represented a genuine political achievement that ended nearly a quarter-century of armed conflict. The Accord created an institutional framework designed to address the CHT's fundamental political grievances through devolved governance, land rights restoration, military withdrawal, and refugee and displaced persons rehabilitation.

The core institutional provisions of the Accord included the establishment of the CHT Regional Council as an apex elected body with authority over coordination across the three hill districts; the strengthening of the three existing Hill District Councils with expanded powers over local administration, law enforcement, education, health, and land management; the return of all CHT land to its pre-conflict legal status pending the resolution of land disputes by a Land Commission created specifically for this purpose; and the withdrawal of all "temporary military camps" from the CHT, with a residual military presence limited to the cantonments at Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban.

The implementation of the Accord over the subsequent quarter century has been a story of systematic failure, punctuated by occasional gestures toward implementation that proved largely symbolic. According to the PCJSS Annual Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts 2025, two thirds of the Accord, including core provisions, remain unimplemented. Even under the Yunus-led interim administration, no significant progress has been made in transferring meaningful authority to regional institutions or resolving longstanding land disputes. The UNPO Academy

The failure of implementation has not been uniform across the Accord's provisions. The two principal failures are the non-withdrawal of military camps and the non-functioning of the Land Commission.

On the military withdrawal question, the number of temporary military camps that were supposed to be withdrawn has been disputed from the beginning. The military and civilian governments have maintained that most temporary camps have indeed been withdrawn, pointing to aggregate figures. The PCJSS and indigenous rights organizations maintain that the camps characterized as "temporary" for purposes of the Accord never included the vast majority of the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

military installation network, which was retrospectively redefined as "permanent" or "operational" rather than "temporary," and that the net military presence in the CHT has actually increased rather than decreased since 1997.

Since the beginning of Operation Uttaran in 2001, the Chittagong Hill Tracts have remained heavily militarised, with indigenous peoples continuing to face ongoing military repression. Netra The photograph documentation and testimonies collected by researchers working in the CHT consistently describe a landscape of military checkpoints, photography prohibitions, arbitrary questioning, and the daily humiliations of a population living under military governance rather than under the civil administration that the Constitution and the Accord both require.

The Land Commission created by the Accord has conducted almost no effective resolution of land disputes over more than two and a half decades, despite the documented displacement of tens of thousands of indigenous families and the continued occupation of their lands by Bengali settlers who moved into the CHT during and after the conflict. The failure of the Land Commission reflects both technical deficiencies in its mandate and procedures, and the political resistance of the military, the settler communities, and the relevant government ministries to any resolution that would require the return of land currently occupied by Bengali settlers.

3.4 The Current Security Situation in the CHT: Multiple Actors, Intersecting Conflicts

The contemporary security situation in the CHT is characterized by a multiplication of actors whose conflicts and interests intersect in ways that make simple narrative accounts inadequate. The principal actors include the Bangladesh Army and its institutional interests in maintaining the security role and economic activities that military presence in the CHT generates; the three Hill District Councils and the CHT Regional Council, which have formal legal authority but limited actual power; the PCJSS and its affiliated Jumma Peoples' Network; the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), a splinter organization that broke from the PCJSS in 1998 in opposition to the Peace Accord and has engaged in periodic armed violence against both PCJSS and state actors; the JSS-Reformed, another faction that has emerged from successive splits in the PCJSS; the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), a newer armed group representing the interests of smaller ethnic communities who feel that the peace process has established a Chakma-dominated political order that does not represent their interests; and the Bengali settler communities and their associated political organizations.

The KNF deserves particular analytical attention because its emergence in the early 2020s represents a new dynamic in the CHT's security landscape that was not anticipated by the peace process architecture. The KNF draws its support primarily from the Bawm, Mro, and Khyang communities of the Bandarban district, which are smaller in number than the Chakma and Marma communities that dominate the PCJSS. The KNF's demand for a separate "Kukiland" homeland separate from the existing CHT administrative structure represents a challenge to both the state and the PCJSS, and its cross-border organizational connections with Kuki groups in Manipur, Mizoram, and Myanmar add a transnational dimension to its activities.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The 1997 peace accord has established a kind of Chakma hegemony in the hill tracts, and smaller ethnic groups like the Kuki-Chin National Front have challenged the peace treaty demanding the creation of an exclusive ethnic homeland. It is high time for Bangladesh to adopt a comprehensive and informed peace strategy to tackle the ethnic conflict and security problems in a systematic and enlightened manner. New Age

The events of late September 2025 illustrated how quickly the CHT's fragile security situation can deteriorate. A 12-year-old Indigenous girl was raped by three Bengali settlers in Khagrachari in September 2025. When her father attempted to file a case, police reportedly pressured him to describe the perpetrators as "three unidentified men" rather than "Bengali settlers," an attempt to obscure the ethnic identity of the accused. The incident triggered widespread outrage among Indigenous youths, with rallies spreading from the hill districts to Chittagong University and Dhaka University. Cultural Survival The state's response, which focused on silencing Indigenous protesters rather than ensuring accountability for the perpetrators, replicated in miniature the larger pattern of institutional impunity that has characterized security force conduct in the CHT since the beginning of the conflict.

The violent response of security forces to the September-October 2025 protests, in which multiple civilians were reported killed by security force gunfire, and the subsequent detention of Indigenous student leaders, drew international attention including communications from United Nations Special Procedures mechanisms. In late September 2025, the Bangladesh Army fired upon tribal residents in Guimara, Khagrachari, killing at least four and injuring more than 40 according to multiple reports. Dmediag

These events are not isolated incidents. They are consistent with a documented pattern of over two decades in which the CHT's indigenous communities face what structural analysis identifies as a self-reinforcing cycle of violence: incidents of violence against indigenous persons by Bengali settlers or security forces; indigenous protests demanding accountability; security force response that criminalizes protesters rather than holding perpetrators accountable; deepening of grievances; and continued cycle.

3.5 Legal Architecture of CHT Governance: Constitutional Status, Special Laws, and Human Rights Obligations

The legal architecture governing the CHT is a complex and often contradictory set of constitutional provisions, special legislation, and international obligations that has never been rationalized into a coherent framework.

The Constitution of Bangladesh is at the apex of this legal architecture. Article 28 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and Article 29 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment. Article 11 guarantees fundamental human rights. These provisions apply fully to the CHT's indigenous population and create constitutional grounds to challenge the discriminatory practices that have been documented in the CHT since independence.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The CHT Regional Council Act of 1998, the three Hill District Council Acts (amended 1998), and the CHT Accord Implementation Act of 1998 create the statutory framework for devolved governance in the CHT. These laws are formally in force, but their implementation is severely limited by the concurrent legal authority of the military under the Special Powers Act, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, and the general framework of military governance that has been maintained in the CHT since 2001.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900, the British colonial instrument, was never formally repealed and continues to provide elements of the legal framework governing land rights and customary law in the CHT, creating a legal palimpsest of colonial, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi provisions that no court has fully rationalized.

The tension between these domestic legal instruments and Bangladesh's international human rights obligations is one of the most important unresolved legal questions in Bangladesh's constitutional law. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bangladesh has ratified, creates obligations of equal protection and non-discrimination that, applied to the CHT, would require either the full implementation of the CHT Accord's devolution provisions or the development of alternative mechanisms that genuinely protect the rights of indigenous peoples. The UN Special Procedures communications of 2025 regarding the CHT, while non-binding, represent authoritative statements of international legal standards that Bangladesh is obligated to take seriously.

The jurisprudential question of whether Bangladesh's domestic courts can and should be used to enforce the rights of CHT indigenous peoples against both state and non-state actors is one to which this Part returns in Chapter Seven, which examines the judicial accountability framework for internal security operations.

CHAPTER FOUR: COUNTER-EXTREMISM ARCHITECTURE: LAW, INSTITUTIONS, AND DEBATES

4.1 The Legal Framework for Counter-Extremism: History and Current State

Bangladesh's legal framework for addressing terrorism and violent extremism has evolved through several distinct phases, each reflecting the political priorities of the government in power as much as the operational requirements of effective counterterrorism.

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009, enacted by the Awami League government that came to power following the military-backed caretaker government period, was Bangladesh's first comprehensive counterterrorism statute, replacing the earlier Suppression of Terrorist Offences Act of 1992 and incorporating the definitional and operational framework of the post-9/11 global counterterrorism agenda. The 2009 Act defined terrorism broadly to include not only acts of violence intended to terrorize the population but also acts that threatened the country's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sovereignty, disrupt national unity, and destroy national economic infrastructure. This broad definition, while consistent with some UN Security Council Resolution 1373 obligations, also created the space for the political misuse of terrorism charges that characterized the Awami League era.

The Act established the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal system, creating specialized courts for terrorism cases in each district with dedicated judges. This institutional innovation represented a genuine improvement over the ordinary courts' handling of terrorism cases, which had been characterized by long delays, security vulnerabilities, and inadequate expertise. But the concentration of terrorism adjudication in specialized courts also reduced the visibility of terrorism prosecutions to ordinary civil society oversight and made it easier to use the terrorism designation for political prosecutions without triggering the public scrutiny that ordinary criminal courts might generate.

The Anti-Terrorism Unit of Bangladesh Police, established by government notification in September 2017 following the Holey Artisan attack, created a dedicated law enforcement capacity for counterterrorism investigation, coordination, and operations. The ATU's legal mandate, formalized in the ATU Rules of 2019, encompasses counter-terrorism (CT), countering violent extremism (CVE), and preventing violent extremism (PVE), making it the lead coordinating, operating, and investigating body for the full spectrum of terrorism-related activity. The ATU's structure includes eight operational wings covering intelligence, investigation, operations, digital forensics, financial investigation, community engagement, capacity building, and international liaison.

The 2025 amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, pushed through by the Yunus interim government as part of its response to the July Revolution, introduced provisions that allowed organizational bans and extended the definition of terrorism in ways that were used primarily against the Awami League rather than against the genuine security threats that the amendments' framers nominally had in mind. On May 12, 2025, the interim government ordered a "temporary" ban on the Awami League, using new authority under draconian amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act. The ban includes prohibitions on meetings, publications, and online speech supporting the party and is being used to arrest Awami League members and peaceful activists. Human Rights Watch

The Bangladesh Editors' Council's warning that the amendments would curtail freedom of expression and limit the scope of media freedom represents a principled challenge to the direction of Bangladesh's counterterrorism legislative framework that deserves serious engagement rather than dismissal as special pleading from affected stakeholders.

4.2 The Institutional Architecture: Multiple Agencies, Coordination Problems

Bangladesh's internal security institutional architecture is characterized by multiple agencies with overlapping jurisdictions, coordination challenges, and a history of interagency competition that has reduced operational effectiveness and created accountability gaps.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The principal security institutions with internal security responsibilities include the Bangladesh Police and its specialized units; the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB); the Bangladesh Coast Guard; the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB); the Anti-Terrorism Unit; the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI); the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI); the National Security Intelligence (NSI); the Special Branch of Police (SB); the Department of Narcotics Control; and in the CHT, the Army's operational command structure.

The multiplicity of intelligence agencies, in particular, creates both practical coordination problems and accountability gaps. The DGFI, which is a military intelligence organization, the DMI, which handles tactical military intelligence, the NSI, which is the principal civilian intelligence agency, and the Special Branch of Police each have different institutional loyalties, different collection methodologies, different analytical frameworks, and different reporting chains. The absence of an effective national intelligence coordinator who can synthesize the products of these different agencies and ensure that the full intelligence picture is presented to national decision-makers is one of the most significant structural weaknesses in Bangladesh's internal security architecture.

The Rapid Action Battalion, created in 2004 as a specialized multi-agency unit combining military and police personnel, deserves particular attention both because of its operational importance and because of its deeply problematic human rights record. RAB was created to address the serious failure of ordinary police to effectively combat organized crime and terrorism, providing a model inspired in part by India's Border Security Force and Pakistan's Ranger-style rapid reaction forces. In its early years, RAB achieved significant successes in disrupting criminal networks and was internationally recognized as an effective law enforcement innovation.

But RAB's human rights record has been deeply and thoroughly documented as constituting systematic violations of fundamental rights. The practice of "crossfire," in which RAB and police units report that suspects were killed when they resisted arrest or when suspects drew weapons, has been credibly documented by human rights organizations as a euphemism for extrajudicial execution. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Bangladesh Human Rights Commission have all documented hundreds of such deaths, raising serious questions about whether what RAB described as "gunfights" constituted in reality planned extrajudicial killings.

The United States government in December 2021 imposed targeted sanctions on RAB and several of its current and former senior officials under the Global Magnitsky Act, citing credible evidence of serious human rights violations including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. These sanctions, which remain in effect as of the writing of this Part, represent the most serious international accountability action taken against any Bangladesh security institution and have significantly complicated Bangladesh's security relationship with the United States.

4.3 Counter-Extremism Doctrine: The "Whole-of-Society" Approach and Its Limitations

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The theoretical framework that Bangladesh officially adopted for countering violent extremism after the Holey Artisan attack was built around what policymakers called a "whole-of-society" approach: the recognition that terrorism and violent extremism cannot be addressed through purely coercive law enforcement methods alone but require a comprehensive response that addresses the social, economic, ideological, and psychological drivers of radicalization.

This framework, which drew directly on the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 and updated periodically since, recognizes that radicalization is a process rather than a status, that individuals become radicalized through exposure to extremist narratives combined with personal grievances, social isolation, identity crisis, and the availability of networks through which violent action can be organized. The strategic implication is that effective counter-extremism requires intervention at multiple points in this radicalization process: ideological counter-narratives that challenge extremist worldviews, community resilience programs that reduce social isolation and address grievances, deradicalization programs for individuals already in the radicalization pipeline, and education reforms that reduce the institutional environments in which radicalization thrives.

Bangladesh's CVE policy, studied in depth by researchers from the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies and recently analyzed in the Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, represents a genuine attempt to implement a whole-of-society approach. The policy drew on Bangladesh-specific research into the drivers of radicalization, including economic marginalization, madrassa education that provides religious knowledge without civic or professional skills, the perceived injustice of global Muslim suffering in conflict zones including Palestine, Kashmir, and Myanmar, family and social networks that provide the structural pathways for radicalization, and online platforms that accelerate and deepen radicalization processes.

The limitations of the whole-of-society approach in Bangladesh's context are, however, significant and deserve honest acknowledgment. The approach requires sustained political will across multiple government ministries, not merely the security agencies; it requires resources for education reform, community development, and social services that compete with other development priorities; it requires civil society partnerships with religious leaders, educators, and community organizations that are themselves sometimes ambivalent about their relationship to the state's security agenda; and it requires a credible rights-based framework for law enforcement that distinguishes legitimate security operations from the political persecution that drives the radicalization it purports to address.

A recent study from the Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism, based on interviews with policy actors who contributed to developing Bangladesh's first CVE policy, found that Bangladeshi policymakers adopted a pragmatic approach characterized by a reverse conflation approach that prioritises human-centric interventions over coercive strategies, termed the 'whole-of-society' approach. Taylor & Francis Online This finding is significant because it represents a genuine intellectual engagement with best-practice counterterrorism theory by Bangladesh's policy community, and because it suggests that the design framework for Bangladesh's CVE policy was more sophisticated than the political misuse of counterterrorism powers would suggest.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The key challenge is implementation: ensuring that the whole-of-society framework that underpins the formal policy actually shapes operational practice at the agency level, rather than being invoked as a theoretical justification for programs that in practice rely primarily on coercive law enforcement.

4.4 The Madrasah Question: Education, Radicalization, and the Policy Dilemma

No analysis of Bangladesh's counter-extremism architecture is complete without addressing the madrasah system, because the madrasah network represents both a genuine pathway for radicalization and an educational institution serving millions of Bangladeshi families who rely on it as the primary source of education for their children, particularly in rural areas where government schools are inadequate or inaccessible.

Bangladesh has two parallel systems of Islamic education: the Aliya madrasah system, which is regulated and formally recognized by the government, follows a curriculum that combines Islamic education with secular subjects, and produces graduates whose qualifications have some formal recognition in the public sector; and the Qawmi madrasah system, which is independent of government regulation, follows a curriculum derived from the Dars-e-Nizami syllabus developed in eighteenth-century South Asian Islamic scholarship, and produces graduates whose qualifications were not recognized by the state until the Awami League government's controversial decision in 2017 to grant the Qawmi Dawrah certificate the equivalence of a Master's degree in Islamic studies.

The Qawmi madrasah system is the one that security analysts focus on in the context of radicalization, because its independence from government regulation, its traditional curriculum that provides deep Islamic knowledge but limited secular education or civic understanding, and its organizational relationship to Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh make it both a vehicle for religious conservatism and a potential environment for radicalization. Hefazat-e-Islam, the organization that emerged from the Qawmi madrasah network in the late 2000s, demonstrated its mobilization capacity in 2013 when it organized a march of hundreds of thousands of supporters on Dhaka and demanded the enactment of a blasphemy law with the death penalty. Its resurgence after July 2024 and its positioning for the 2026 elections represents one of the most significant trends in Bangladesh's current internal security environment.

The policy dilemma is this: the Qawmi madrasah system educates approximately 1.5 million students, provides social services in communities where the state is absent, and is deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric of rural Bangladesh. Any policy that is perceived as an attack on the Qawmi system would be politically explosive, would alienate millions of families who see it as providing legitimate religious education, and could actually increase radicalization by confirming the extremist narrative that the secular state is at war with Islam. But the absence of any regulatory framework for the Qawmi system leaves a large educational environment in which extremist narratives can propagate with limited external scrutiny.

The approach recommended by most serious analysts, and consistent with international comparative practice, involves the incremental integration of civic education, critical thinking, and professional skills into Qawmi curricula through negotiated engagement with Qawmi

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

leadership, combined with transparent monitoring of ideological content that incites violence, and targeted deradicalization programs for the subset of madrasah graduates who show radicalization indicators. This approach is slower and messier than regulatory intervention, but it is far more likely to achieve durable results precisely because it works with rather than against the social fabric within which the madrasah system is embedded.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROHINGYA SECURITY NEXUS

5.1 From Humanitarian Crisis to Security Challenge

The presence of approximately 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, the largest refugee settlement in the world, represents one of the most significant and multidimensional internal security challenges Bangladesh has ever faced. Parts One through Eight of this textbook addressed the Rohingya crisis primarily in its external dimensions: the refugee influx as a product of Myanmar state violence, the strains on the bilateral Bangladesh-Myanmar relationship, the geopolitical complications of having the Arakan Army control the territory across the border, and the international political efforts to create conditions for voluntary and safe return.

This chapter addresses the Rohingya situation in its internal security dimensions, which are substantial, growing, and deeply interwoven with the counter-extremism and CHT security challenges analyzed in the preceding chapters.

The humanitarian emergency that created the Rohingya camps in 2017 required a response focused on immediate survival needs: food, water, shelter, medical care, and basic sanitation for a population that arrived in Bangladesh in a state of extreme trauma and material deprivation. The humanitarian response was, by the standards of refugee crises, impressively organized and generously funded by the international community. But the political and security implications of hosting over a million refugees indefinitely, in conditions that now show clear signs of permanence rather than temporariness, were never adequately addressed in the humanitarian response framework.

The camps, organized around Cox's Bazar and the Kutupalong complex which is the largest single concentration, are controlled in terms of external security by the Bangladesh military and the BGB, with civilian administration through the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner. Within the camps, however, governance is primarily exercised by community leaders, madji, and increasingly by armed groups that have moved into the governance vacuum created by the absence of adequate rule of law within the camps.

5.2 Armed Groups and Criminal Networks in the Rohingya Camps

The internal governance vacuum in the Rohingya camps has been filled, partially and violently, by a complex ecosystem of armed groups whose activities range from political mobilization

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

through criminal enterprise to terrorism. The principal armed actors include the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA), and various local criminal networks engaged in drug trafficking, human trafficking, extortion, and robbery.

ARSA, which first came to international attention with its attacks on Myanmar police posts in August 2017 that precipitated the massive military crackdown that drove the refugee wave, has maintained organizational presence in the camps since the beginning and has been documented conducting enforcement operations against camp residents, extorting businesses, and assassinating community leaders who cooperate with Bangladeshi authorities or resist ARSA's authority. ARSA's connections to international Islamist networks, including those in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, have been documented by researchers though the degree of operational control exercised by external actors over ARSA's activities remains contested.

Intelligence circles have warned of a possible security situation developing in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Rohingya refugee areas of Bangladesh, with Rohingya armed groups apparently being provided arms and ammunition by entities having considerable influence in the recently elected government in Dhaka. HinduPost These allegations, reported in The Sunday Guardian in March 2026, remain contested and require careful evaluation; but the broader concern about the intersection of domestic political interests and Rohingya armed groups is consistent with established patterns in which regional actors have attempted to use the Rohingya situation as a lever of influence over Bangladesh's internal politics.

The drug trafficking dimension of the Rohingya security nexus is particularly alarming in scale. Myanmar's Rakhine and Shan states are major sources of yaba (methamphetamine) that is trafficked primarily through Cox's Bazar into Bangladesh and then to domestic markets and regional transit routes. The scale of this trafficking, which has made Cox's Bazar one of the most drug-affected areas of Bangladesh, has corrupted elements of the police and border security forces responsible for interdiction, created drug dependency that feeds both criminal networks and extremist recruitment, and generated the kind of institutional corruption that makes effective security governance difficult.

5.3 Policy Responses and Their Limitations

Bangladesh's policy toward the Rohingya camps has been characterized by an inherent tension between the humanitarian imperative to provide protection and assistance to a persecuted refugee population and the security imperative to prevent the camps from becoming permanently embedded internal security problems. This tension has never been resolved, and the policy oscillations between humanitarian openness and security restriction have created the worst of both worlds in some respects: insufficient humanitarian investment to create viable long-term camp conditions, and insufficient security investment to prevent the armed groups from filling the governance vacuum.

The decision of successive governments, including the Hasina government and the Yunus interim government, to restrict Rohingya access to education and formal employment represents a policy choice that creates precisely the conditions identified by radicalization research as conducive to extremist recruitment: young men with no economic prospects, no educational

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

engagement, no legal status that provides a stake in the social order, and abundant exposure to extremist narratives through social media and community networks. The restriction of education and employment was justified as a deterrent to permanent settlement and as a political signal to Myanmar that Bangladesh did not intend to absorb the refugee population indefinitely. But its counterterrorism costs are substantial and growing.

The physical relocation of a substantial portion of the camp population to Bhasan Char, a silt island in the Bay of Bengal, has been deeply controversial from a humanitarian perspective and does not address the fundamental security challenges in the camps. The island's geographic isolation, while superficially appealing from a containment perspective, actually reduces the monitoring and accountability capacity of civil society organizations that have been one of the most important external checks on security force conduct and armed group activities in the camps.

The sustainable solution to the Rohingya security nexus is, in the last analysis, the creation of conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified return to Myanmar. This requires the kind of political settlement in Myanmar that, given the current state of the Myanmar civil war and the Arakan Army's consolidation of control over Rakhine State, does not appear achievable in the near term. Bangladesh must therefore plan for a prolonged management challenge rather than an imminent resolution, and must design its internal security architecture for the camps accordingly.

CHAPTER SIX: POLICE REFORM, PARAMILITARY FORCES, AND THE SECURITY SECTOR

6.1 The Bangladesh Police: History, Problems, and Reform Imperatives

The Bangladesh Police Force, with approximately 200,000 officers serving a population of approximately 170 million, is dramatically understaffed by international comparative standards: the ratio of approximately 1 officer per 850 citizens compares unfavorably to international recommendations of 1 per 450 and reflects both budget constraints and deliberate political choices about the role of policing in Bangladesh's governance architecture.

The structural problems of the Bangladesh Police go beyond mere numbers. The colonial heritage of the Police Act of 1861, enacted by the British administration in the aftermath of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny specifically to ensure that the police would be an instrument of state control rather than a service to citizens, continues to shape the institutional culture, organizational structure, and operational philosophy of the Bangladesh Police in ways that are directly relevant to internal security effectiveness and human rights compliance.

The 1861 Act placed the police firmly under executive control: the Inspector General of Police reported to the Home Minister, district officers commanded the district police, and the operational independence of the police from political direction that is considered a prerequisite of effective democratic policing in most contemporary frameworks was explicitly rejected as the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

organizing principle. This executive control model, combined with the use of police as an instrument of political governance throughout Bangladesh's post-independence history, has created an institutional culture in which responsiveness to political direction takes precedence over responsiveness to law or to citizens.

The specific problems that characterize the Bangladesh Police's performance in its internal security functions include the pervasive use of bribery in the investigation and prosecution process, which means that criminal justice outcomes in Bangladesh are significantly determined by the financial resources of the parties rather than by evidence and law; the use of detention without charge as a routine investigative and political tool, enabled by the liberal interpretation of preventive detention provisions in security legislation; the practice of "case filing," in which police register cases against individuals at the direction of political superiors or in exchange for payment by adverse parties, regardless of the evidentiary basis; and the institutional impunity that protects officers who commit abuses from meaningful accountability.

The reforms that are required to transform the Bangladesh Police into an effective, accountable, and rights-respecting internal security institution are both institutional and legal. At the institutional level, the most important reforms include the creation of an independent Police Commission, insulated from executive direction, to manage police appointments, transfers, and disciplinary matters; the development of a strong internal affairs capacity with genuine authority to investigate and sanction police misconduct; the introduction of community policing models that rebuild the trust between police and communities that systematic misuse of police powers has destroyed; and the reorientation of police training toward rights-based policing standards consistent with Bangladesh's international obligations.

6.2 The Border Guard Bangladesh: Frontier Security and Its Challenges

The Border Guard Bangladesh, with approximately 38,000 personnel organized into battalions deployed along Bangladesh's approximately 4,156 kilometers of land border, represents the primary instrument of frontier security and has direct relevance to internal security through its role in preventing the cross-border movement of arms, drugs, and personnel associated with insurgent groups and criminal networks.

The BGB's predecessor, the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), played a significant role in the Liberation War of 1971, with many EPR units joining the Bangladeshi resistance and contributing critically to early armed operations against Pakistani forces. The BGB therefore has a heritage of national service that gives it a distinct institutional identity from either the regular military or the police. Its training and doctrine reflect this heritage: BGB personnel are trained in both border security operations and in light infantry skills that enable them to respond to armed incursions and security emergencies along the frontier.

The BGB's internal security functions include the prevention of illegal cross-border movement, which encompasses the smuggling of drugs, arms, and human trafficking; border patrolling that deters cross-border militant operations; the Rohingya camp perimeter security in Cox's Bazar; and providing security in border areas during civil unrest. These functions bring the BGB into regular contact with both the civilian populations of Bangladesh's border regions and with the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

various armed groups that operate in those regions, creating both human rights obligations and operational challenges.

The BGB Pilkhana Mutiny of February 2009, in which disaffected BGB soldiers massacred 74 senior officers during an annual dinner event at BGB headquarters in Dhaka, was the most catastrophic single internal security event in Bangladesh's post-independence history in terms of its institutional damage to a security force. The mutiny, which reflected deep institutional grievances about pay disparities, food quality, and service conditions, exposed severe problems in the civil-military relationship within the paramilitary structure and has had lasting consequences for BGB institutional culture and civil-military relations analysis more broadly.

6.3 The Rapid Action Battalion: Effectiveness, Controversy, and the Reform Question

RAB was created in 2004 by the BNP government of Khaleda Zia in response to a documented failure of ordinary police to effectively address the serious organized crime and emerging terrorism threats that Bangladesh faced in the early 2000s. The creation of a multi-agency force combining selected personnel from the police, military, navy, air force, and border guard under a unified command, with a mandate to conduct rapid response operations against serious criminal and security threats, represented a pragmatic institutional innovation that drew on similar models in other South Asian states.

RAB's early operational record included genuine achievements against organized crime networks and, after 2007, against JMB and other Islamist militant organizations. The combination of military training and operational discipline with police investigative powers gave RAB capabilities that exceeded those of the ordinary police in high-risk operational environments.

The human rights record that accompanied these operational achievements is, however, deeply damning. The systematic practice of extrajudicial killing under the euphemism of "crossfire" that characterized RAB's operations from its earliest years, and that was documented in meticulous detail by organizations including Odhikar, Ain O Salish Kendra, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, represents one of the most serious documented patterns of security force abuse in South Asia over the past two decades. The specific numbers are staggering: Odhikar documented more than 400 deaths in alleged crossfire encounters between 2004 and 2007 alone, and the overall toll of extrajudicial killings by RAB and police over the subsequent fifteen years runs into the thousands by the most conservative credible estimates.

The American sanctions imposed in December 2021 were not imposed on the basis of isolated incidents or politically motivated accusations but on the basis of a detailed evidentiary record compiled by multiple independent sources. These sanctions, which targeted the RAB as an institution and specific former senior officers by name, represent an unusually strong statement of international accountability concern, particularly given the United States government's general reluctance to impose such sanctions on the security forces of states it considers strategic partners.

The reform question is therefore not whether RAB requires fundamental reform but what form that reform should take. The arguments for abolition are that the institutional culture of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

extrajudicial violence is too deeply embedded to be reformed without a complete institutional restart, and that the operational functions currently performed by RAB could be redistributed to reformed ordinary police units. The arguments for reform are that RAB's specialized capabilities, including its organized crime investigation expertise and its counterterrorism operational capacity, represent institutional assets that would take years to rebuild in alternative institutions, and that the abolition of a security institution in the current threat environment could create a security vacuum.

The principled position recommended in this textbook is that the debate about abolition versus reform, while important, should not be resolved on the basis of institutional convenience but on the basis of whether any credible reform pathway exists that can genuinely transform RAB's operational culture while maintaining its operational effectiveness. The American sanctions themselves create an institutional incentive for reform: Bangladesh's access to American military assistance, intelligence sharing, and security cooperation is constrained by RAB's sanction status, giving the BNP government elected in 2026 a concrete strategic incentive to pursue meaningful accountability and reform.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE JURISPRUDENCE OF LEGITIMATE INTERNAL FORCE: PHILOSOPHY, LAW, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

7.1 The Philosophical Problem: When May the State Kill Its Own People?

The most fundamental jurisprudential question in internal security is the question of when the state may legitimately use lethal force against persons within its own jurisdiction. This question is philosophically prior to all the institutional design and legal framework questions discussed in preceding chapters, because the answer to it defines the outer boundaries of legitimate state authority and creates the normative framework within which specific policies must be assessed.

The philosophical traditions relevant to this question divide, broadly, into those that ground the legitimacy of state force in social contract theory, those that ground it in natural law, and those that approach it through the lens of consequentialist ethical theory.

Social contract theories, in the Hobbesian and Lockean traditions reviewed in Part One, identify the state's monopoly on legitimate violence as the product of the original surrender of individual self-defense rights to the sovereign in exchange for collective security. On this account, the state may legitimately use force against those who breach the social contract by engaging in violence against others: criminals, terrorists, insurgents, and aggressors. The limits on this authority are defined by the terms of the social contract itself: the state may not use force against persons who are exercising the rights that the social contract was designed to protect.

The natural law tradition, represented in the just war framework from Aquinas through Grotius and Vattel, provides a different but complementary account. Force may legitimately be used in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

defense of natural rights, including the right to life of innocents; it must be authorized by legitimate authority; it must be proportionate to the threat it addresses; and it must be a last resort after other means of addressing the threat have been exhausted or are clearly inadequate. The natural law tradition also insists on the distinction between combatants and civilians: force may be directed only against those who are themselves using or directly threatening force, not against the general population from which threats emerge.

The consequentialist tradition asks not about the inherent rightness or wrongness of particular acts of state force but about the consequences of different force policies for overall human welfare. A consequentialist analysis of Bangladesh's "crossfire" policy would note that whatever short-term crime reduction benefits it may have produced, the systematic practice of extrajudicial execution destroyed public trust in the rule of law, radicalized communities whose members were killed, created the conditions for international sanctions that damaged Bangladesh's security partnerships, and established an institutional culture of impunity that generalized beyond the specific contexts of counterterrorism and organized crime suppression. The consequentialist verdict on extrajudicial killing, rigorously applied, is firmly negative.

7.2 The Legal Framework for Use of Force in Internal Security Operations

International human rights law establishes a clear framework for the use of force in internal security operations that applies to police and other law enforcement agencies and that governs the circumstances in which lethal force may be used.

The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the Eighth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in 1990, represent the authoritative international standard for police use of force. They establish that law enforcement officials shall not use firearms except in specified extreme circumstances: to defend themselves or others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury; to prevent the perpetration of a particularly serious crime involving grave threat to life; to arrest a person presenting such a danger and resisting their authority; or to prevent their escape; and only when less extreme means are insufficient to achieve these objectives.

The Principles establish additional constraints: force must always be proportionate to the objective achieved and the seriousness of the offence; intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life; and security forces must provide medical assistance to injured persons as soon as possible.

The "crossfire" encounters that characterized RAB's operations do not meet these standards under any credible interpretation. The pattern of deaths in which suspects who are described as being shot and killed while resisting arrest or attempting to escape systematically occurs in circumstances where forensic evidence indicates execution-style killings, where deaths occur without witnesses other than security force personnel, and where no weapons are recovered despite official claims that suspects drew weapons and opened fire, is not consistent with the lawful use of force framework but is consistent with a policy of deliberate extrajudicial execution.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The question of whether specific "crossfire" killings constitute extrajudicial executions, and therefore crimes under both Bangladesh's domestic law and its international obligations, has been litigated in Bangladesh's courts with limited success due to the inability of complainants to overcome institutional resistance to investigation. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has, in several cases, acknowledged that "crossfire" deaths raise serious legal questions but has stopped short of the kind of systematic judicial scrutiny that the pattern of conduct would require.

International law also establishes the obligation to investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible for extrajudicial killings. The UN Human Rights Committee, in its jurisprudence under the ICCPR, has consistently held that states are obligated to conduct effective, independent, and impartial investigations of all deaths that occur in the context of law enforcement operations, and that the failure to do so constitutes a continuing violation of the right to life.

7.3 The Special Problem of Emergency Powers and Security Detention

Bangladesh's internal security legal architecture includes several provisions enabling detention without trial in circumstances defined as threats to state security. These provisions, while not unique to Bangladesh, are among the most extensive and most frequently misused in South Asia.

The Special Powers Act of 1974, enacted by the Mujib government in the final years of Bangladesh's first period of constitutional governance, enables detention without trial for up to 120 days, renewable, on the basis of an administrative order that is not subject to judicial review in the ordinary sense. The SPA was designed for situations of genuine national emergency, but it has been used systematically by every government since its enactment as a tool for detaining political opponents without the evidentiary requirements of ordinary criminal prosecution.

The Digital Security Act of 2018, and its replacement the Cyber Security Act of 2023, created new security detention powers in the digital realm that have been used primarily against journalists, bloggers, and social media users who publish material critical of the government. The UN Human Rights Office has been explicit that these laws, as applied in practice, violate Bangladesh's obligations under the ICCPR's protections of freedom of expression and freedom from arbitrary detention.

The jurisprudential analysis of security detention legislation in constitutional democracies identifies three essential constraints that must be satisfied for security detention to be consistent with the rule of law. First, the grounds for detention must be defined with sufficient precision that individuals can predict whether their conduct brings them within the detention power, and that courts can meaningfully review whether those grounds are satisfied in any specific case. Second, detention must be subject to prompt judicial review through a habeas corpus or equivalent mechanism that is genuinely independent of the executive branch. Third, the conditions of detention must meet minimum standards of humane treatment, and detainees must have access to legal counsel.

Bangladesh's security detention legislation, as applied in practice, fails all three of these tests. The grounds for detention under the SPA and other security instruments are defined so broadly

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that virtually any conduct can be characterized as a security threat; judicial review is nominal rather than effective, with courts rarely ordering release in security detention cases; and the conditions of detention in security cases have been documented as including torture and other ill-treatment.

7.4 International Humanitarian Law and Non-International Armed Conflict in Bangladesh

The question of whether any of Bangladesh's internal security situations rise to the threshold of non-international armed conflict, triggering the application of international humanitarian law, is one of the most important and least examined legal questions in Bangladesh's security architecture.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which applies to all armed conflicts not of an international character occurring in the territory of a party, requires that persons not taking part in hostilities be treated humanely in all circumstances, prohibits violence to life and person including murder, mutilation, torture, and cruel treatment; taking of hostages; outrages upon personal dignity; and the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court.

The threshold for the application of Common Article 3 requires that there be a level of armed violence between organized armed groups and state forces that exceeds mere internal disturbances and tensions. The legal determination of whether this threshold was crossed during specific periods of CHT operations, Shanti Bahini combat, or anti-insurgency operations in the CHT from the 1970s through the 1990s, is a question with both legal and historical significance. If the CHT conflict did constitute a non-international armed conflict within the meaning of Common Article 3 for any period, then the state's obligations would have extended beyond ordinary law enforcement standards to include the laws of war, and violations of those laws by both parties would constitute war crimes.

The analysis of the CHT conflict against the Common Article 3 threshold suggests that the conflict likely crossed that threshold during at least the period of intensive Shanti Bahini operations from approximately 1977 to 1996. The PCJSS fielded an organized armed force with a clear command structure, conducted sustained military operations against Bangladesh security forces, controlled territory, and demonstrated the organizational capacity that the law requires for application of Article 3. The Bangladesh security forces' responses, including helicopter gunship attacks, displacement of civilian populations, and the documented instances of mass killing, are more consistent with military operations than ordinary law enforcement. If this analysis is correct, it means that the Bangladesh state's conduct in the CHT during this period should be assessed against international humanitarian law standards, not merely human rights law standards, with significant implications for accountability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER EIGHT: INTEGRATING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY: INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND POLICY COHERENCE

8.1 The National Security Council and Whole-of-Government Coordination

Bangladesh lacks a fully functional National Security Council in the sense that the term is understood in most established democracies: a formal institutional mechanism that brings together the principal political, military, intelligence, and diplomatic leaders to provide strategic direction for the comprehensive national security agenda, including both its external defense and internal security dimensions.

The absence of this institutional mechanism is a significant structural weakness in Bangladesh's internal security architecture, because without a formal coordinating body that operates at the strategic level, the various components of the internal security system, the military, the police, the intelligence agencies, the border security forces, and the relevant civilian ministries, operate on the basis of their own institutional priorities rather than on the basis of a coherent national strategy.

The Armed Forces Division of the Prime Minister's Office provides a degree of coordination between the military services, and the Ministry of Home Affairs provides civilian oversight of the police and intelligence agencies. But these two coordination mechanisms operate in largely parallel tracks without systematic integration, and the result is a national security architecture in which the external security dimension and the internal security dimension are developed and managed separately, with coordination occurring primarily at the operational level when specific incidents require joint responses rather than at the strategic level where coherent policy is made.

The national security architecture reforms recommended in this textbook include the establishment of a statutory National Security Council with a defined membership including the Prime Minister as chair, the Finance Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Home Minister, the Defense Minister, and the chiefs of the armed services and principal intelligence agencies; a National Security Advisor who serves as the professional head of the NSC secretariat and provides the Prime Minister with integrated strategic advice; and a Deputy National Security Advisor with specific responsibility for internal security coordination.

The NSC should be supported by a permanent professional secretariat that provides strategic analysis, coordinates interagency policy development, manages the national security review cycle, and ensures that Bangladesh's internal and external security policies are mutually reinforcing rather than organizationally isolated from each other.

8.2 Intelligence Integration: The Case for a National Intelligence Director

The multiplicity of intelligence agencies discussed in Chapter Six represents one of the most serious organizational weaknesses in Bangladesh's internal security architecture. The practical consequence of having multiple agencies collect intelligence on the same threats without

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

systematic integration is that the national decision-maker receives a fragmented picture in which the most important analytical synthesis, the assessment of how different intelligence streams combine to create a composite threat picture, occurs incompletely or not at all.

The reform model most relevant to Bangladesh's situation is not the American post-9/11 reform that created the Director of National Intelligence, which was designed for a massive intelligence community serving a global superpower's needs, but the smaller-scale integration models adopted by states of comparable size and institutional capacity, including Malaysia's National Security Council secretariat model and Singapore's highly integrated intelligence architecture.

The essential elements of an effective intelligence integration reform for Bangladesh include the designation of a National Intelligence Coordinator, serving under the National Security Advisor, with the authority to task collection across all intelligence agencies, to set analytical priorities, and to present integrated assessments to the Prime Minister and NSC; the establishment of fusion centers for the most significant threat categories, including terrorism, organized crime, and the CHT security situation; and the creation of minimum standards for information sharing between agencies that prevent the institutional hoarding of intelligence that has characterized interagency relations in Bangladesh's current system.

8.3 Federalism, Decentralization, and Internal Security

Bangladesh's highly centralized administrative structure creates specific challenges for internal security governance, because the threats that manifest at the local level, communal violence, insurgent activity, criminal networks, drug trafficking, require local intelligence and local response capacity that cannot effectively be organized from the center.

The existing administrative framework of districts and upazilas, each with its own police and administrative structure, provides a formal mechanism for decentralized security governance, but the degree of local autonomy in security decision-making is severely limited by the command and control structure that flows from the Ministry of Home Affairs in Dhaka. District-level police commanders have limited authority to respond to emerging security situations without seeking guidance from the ministry, and the lack of local intelligence capacity means that the early warning function that effective decentralized security governance requires is often absent.

The proposed reforms include the strengthening of district-level intelligence fusion centers that bring together police, BGB, and civilian intelligence inputs at the local level; the development of community policing programs that build local intelligence networks through relationship-based engagement rather than surveillance; the creation of district security committees chaired by the District Commissioner that bring together relevant security and civilian stakeholders for regular assessments of the local security situation; and the development of rapid response protocols that allow district-level commanders to take initial security actions without the delays of centralized approval.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER NINE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: TOWARD A DURABLE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

9.1 Why the CHT Problem Cannot Be Solved by Security Means Alone

The analysis developed in Chapter Three establishes the proposition that forms the foundation for the prescriptive discussion in this chapter: the CHT security problem cannot be solved by security means alone. This is not a politically convenient assertion designed to minimize the security dimensions of the challenge; it is an analytical conclusion supported by five decades of evidence.

The period from the 1970s to the 1997 Peace Accord demonstrated that military operations of substantial scale and intensity against the Shanti Bahini, while inflicting operational damage on the armed movement, could not resolve the underlying political conflict that sustained the movement and generated its popular support. The insurgency continued, with varying intensity, for approximately twenty-two years of active military engagement before the political dialogue that produced the 1997 Accord created conditions for a ceasefire. The military strategy did not win; the political process did.

The period from 1997 to the present has demonstrated that an incomplete political process whose core provisions remain unimplemented twenty-seven years after signing generates the security consequences that political failure always generates: continued armed activity by splinter groups that reject the unfulfilled accord, periodic eruptions of communal violence that exploit the continued structural grievances, growing international attention that constrains Bangladesh's diplomatic freedom of action, and the mobilization of new armed groups like the KNF that fill the political and security vacuum left by the failed peace process.

The strategic logic that emerges from this analysis is clear: the path to durable security in the CHT runs through genuine implementation of the 1997 Accord, including in particular the withdrawal of temporary military camps, the full empowerment of the Hill District Councils and Regional Council, and the functioning of the Land Commission. These are not merely political concessions to an insurgent demand; they are the security prerequisites for creating the conditions under which armed groups will lose their popular support base and their recruitment narrative.

9.2 The Full Implementation Framework: What Is Required

Full implementation of the 1997 CHT Accord, in the sense that the implementing acts and the Accord itself contemplate, requires actions in several parallel tracks.

On the military withdrawal track, the government must develop a comprehensive inventory of all military installations in the CHT, categorized according to the "temporary" versus "permanent" distinction in the Accord, through a process that includes independent verification by a credible third party such as the National Human Rights Commission or an international observer. On the basis of this inventory, a phased withdrawal timeline should be developed and publicly

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

committed to, with specific milestones that can be monitored. The residual military presence should be limited to the three cantonment areas specified in the Accord, with all other camps being either transferred to the civil administration or formally designated as the Accord contemplates.

On the land rights track, the Land Commission requires fundamental reform: its mandate should be clarified to provide it with the authority and resources necessary to adjudicate land disputes effectively; its procedural rules should be reformed to ensure that indigenous customary land rights are given the legal recognition that the Accord envisions; and a timeline should be set for the completion of the backlog of pending cases, most of which have been awaiting resolution for more than a decade.

On the governance track, the full transfer of the subjects listed in the three Hill District Council Acts to the jurisdiction of the respective Hill District Councils should be completed, including in particular the control of law and order and the management of land and forest resources. The CHT Regional Council should be accorded the coordinating authority over the three Hill District Councils that the Regional Council Act contemplates, including the authority to formulate CHT development plans, to regulate the movement of outsiders into the CHT, and to coordinate the rehabilitation of internally displaced indigenous persons.

9.3 The KNF Challenge: Engaging the New Armed Groups

The emergence of the KNF as a significant armed actor in the CHT, specifically in the Bandarban district, represents a challenge to the peace process that the existing institutional framework is poorly equipped to address, because the institutional framework was designed to address the PCJSS-government conflict rather than the inter-ethnic political disputes that the KNF represents.

The KNF's demand for a separate Kukiland homeland is, under the existing constitutional and administrative framework, not something that the government can grant without a constitutional amendment and a fundamental restructuring of the CHT's administrative architecture. But dismissing the KNF's underlying concerns as illegitimate without addressing the genuine grievances of smaller ethnic communities that feel underrepresented in a peace process dominated by the larger Chakma and Marma communities would be both analytically wrong and practically counterproductive.

The constructive approach requires engaging the KNF's political leadership through a formal dialogue process that includes representation of all CHT ethnic communities, not merely the PCJSS and the government. This dialogue should address the structural representation question: whether the existing CHT governance architecture, with its CHT Regional Council dominated by the larger ethnic groups, adequately represents the interests of smaller communities, and what modifications might address the underrepresentation concern without requiring the territorial partition that the KNF's Kukiland demand implies.

Cross-border coordination with India and Myanmar on the KNF's transnational organizational connections is also necessary, because the KNF's ability to operate across the tri-border area of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Mizoram, Manipur, and Bandarban district provides it with strategic depth that purely domestic security operations cannot effectively address. This coordination requires the kind of intelligence sharing and joint operational planning that the bilateral Bangladesh-India relationship has not consistently delivered, and that the current state of Bangladesh-Myanmar relations makes even more difficult.

CHAPTER TEN: LEGISLATIVE REFORM FOR INTERNAL SECURITY

10.1 The Case for Comprehensive Internal Security Legislation

Bangladesh's internal security legislative framework, as analyzed throughout this Part, is a historical accumulation of acts, regulations, and ordinances spanning from the colonial Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation of 1900 through the post-independence Special Powers Act of 1974 to the 2025 amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act. This accumulation has never been subjected to a comprehensive review and rationalization that would bring it into conformity with Bangladesh's constitutional framework, its international human rights obligations, and the operational requirements of effective internal security governance in the twenty-first century.

The case for comprehensive internal security legislation is built on several distinct arguments. The first is the constitutional argument: the current legislative framework contains provisions that are inconsistent with the fundamental rights guarantees of Bangladesh's Constitution, including the right to equality before law, the protection against arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to a fair trial, and the freedom of expression, assembly, and association. These inconsistencies can be resolved either through constitutional amendment or through the legislative rationalization of the security framework in ways that achieve the security objectives while respecting constitutional constraints.

The second is the international obligations argument: Bangladesh's ratification of the ICCPR, the Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Conventions, and other international human rights and humanitarian law instruments creates binding legal obligations that the current legislative framework does not fully satisfy. Comprehensive legislative reform provides the opportunity to bring Bangladesh's domestic law into conformity with its international obligations in a systematic rather than piecemeal way.

The third is the operational effectiveness argument: a fragmented and internally inconsistent legislative framework is operationally inefficient because it creates ambiguities about jurisdiction, authority, and applicable standards that complicate security force operations and generate legal vulnerabilities in prosecution cases. A comprehensive internal security act that clearly defines the authority, obligations, and accountability mechanisms of each security institution would improve operational effectiveness as well as accountability.

10.2 Draft Elements of a Bangladesh Internal Security Act

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Drawing on the analysis developed throughout this Part and on comparative examples from states that have successfully reformed their internal security legislative frameworks, this section proposes the principal elements of a Bangladesh Internal Security Act that would rationalize the existing legislative architecture.

A Bangladesh Internal Security Act should establish, as its foundational provisions, the principle that all internal security operations are subject to the rule of law, defined as the requirement that all security force actions must have a legal basis, must be necessary and proportionate to the threat addressed, and must be subject to judicial oversight and accountability. This foundational principle should be stated as the interpretive framework for all other provisions of the Act and should constitute a basis for judicial review of security force conduct.

The Act should define the roles and responsibilities of each of the principal security institutions, clarifying their respective jurisdictions, the circumstances in which they may operate, the authorities they require to exercise their functions, and the accountability mechanisms to which they are subject. This definitional clarity should address the current overlaps and gaps that characterize the institutional architecture described in Chapter Six.

The Act should comprehensively address the grounds and procedures for security detention, replacing the broad and ill-defined powers of the Special Powers Act and the various security ordinances with a framework that specifies precisely the grounds on which security detention may be ordered, the maximum duration of detention without charge, the judicial oversight mechanism including the right to immediate legal representation and prompt appearance before a court, and the conditions of detention. The maximum duration of any administrative detention without charge should be no more than 48 hours, after which detention must be either converted to ordinary criminal detention with formal charges or terminated.

The Act should include a dedicated chapter on the use of force, incorporating the substantive standards of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and making them enforceable as domestic law. This chapter should establish that any use of lethal force must be reported to a designated independent authority within 24 hours, that every such report should be reviewed by a Use of Force Review Board, and that any case in which the review raises questions of lawfulness should be referred to the relevant criminal investigative authority.

The Act should establish an Internal Security Ombudsman with the authority to receive complaints from any person alleging unlawful conduct by internal security forces, to investigate those complaints independently, to make recommendations for prosecution to the Attorney General where the evidence warrants, and to publish annual reports on the pattern of complaints and the responses to them.

The CHT provisions of the Act should specifically incorporate the commitments of the 1997 Peace Accord and provide the legislative framework for their full implementation, including the transfer of jurisdiction to the Hill District Councils and Regional Council, the establishment of an effective Land Commission, and the protection of indigenous land rights through a legal framework that gives the Accord's provisions the status of statutory entitlements enforceable in court.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

10.3 Reform of the Anti-Terrorism Legislation

The Anti-Terrorism Act requires comprehensive reform to address the two principal problems identified in this Part: the overly broad definition of terrorism that enables political misuse, and the inadequate procedural protections for persons accused of terrorism offences.

On the definitional question, the definition of terrorism in any legislation consistent with Bangladesh's international obligations must be limited to acts of violence or threats of violence intended to intimidate or coerce a population or government for political, ideological, religious, or ethnic purposes. It must explicitly exclude from the definition non-violent political activity, peaceful protest, civil disobedience, labor organizing, and any other forms of political expression and association that are protected under the ICCPR and the Constitution. It must include clear provisions establishing that the mere expression of views, even views that are offensive, extreme, or religiously conservative, does not constitute terrorism in the absence of an actual threat or use of violence.

On the procedural question, terrorism cases require a more intensive safeguards package than ordinary criminal cases, not less, precisely because the gravity of the potential consequences for the accused demands the highest standards of evidence and process. The establishment of specialized terrorism courts is consistent with effective counterterrorism practice, but these courts must operate according to the same fundamental procedural standards as ordinary courts: the presumption of innocence, the right to legal representation from the moment of arrest, the right to challenge the evidence against one in an adversarial proceeding, and the right of appeal to a court of ordinary jurisdiction.

The organizational ban power introduced by the 2025 amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act should be either repealed or subjected to strict judicial oversight requirements: any ban on a political organization should require a court order based on clear and convincing evidence that the organization as a whole, not merely some of its members, is engaged in or planning terrorist violence, and the ban order should be subject to appeal on both evidentiary and constitutional grounds.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS

11.1 The Accountability Gap: Why Internal Security Forces Are Not Held Accountable

The accountability gap in Bangladesh's internal security framework, the systematic failure to investigate, prosecute, and punish members of security forces who commit serious abuses, is not primarily a legal or institutional problem: it is a political problem. The legal and institutional

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

mechanisms for accountability, at least in formal terms, largely exist. The courts have jurisdiction over criminal offences committed by security force personnel. The police have internal affairs units. The military has court martial procedures. The Human Rights Commission has investigative authority. What these mechanisms lack is not legal authority but political will.

The political dynamics that create the accountability gap are well understood. Governments of all political persuasions in Bangladesh have found that tolerating security force abuse is politically less costly in the short term than investigating and prosecuting it. Investigation and prosecution of security force abuses creates enemies within the security establishment, generates morale problems in institutions whose operational effectiveness depends on discipline and commitment, and risks the political embarrassment of formal court findings that security forces acting under government authority committed serious crimes. The short-term political calculation, for every government that has faced it, has consistently come down on the side of impunity.

The long-term security costs of this calculation are, however, very high. The impunity that protects security force members from accountability for abuses also protects them from accountability for corruption, incompetence, and the dereliction of duty that enables genuine security threats to develop. The institutional culture that normalizes abuse also normalizes the operational dysfunction, the poor command decisions, the inadequate training, and the failure of institutional learning that make Bangladesh's security forces less effective than they should be. The political costs of impunity compound over time as communities whose members have been victimized by security force abuses withdraw cooperation from those forces, making intelligence collection and community policing impossible in exactly the environments where they are most needed.

11.2 Mechanisms for Accountability: Domestic and International

The mechanisms for accountability for security force abuses in internal security operations operate at multiple levels, from internal military or police disciplinary systems through domestic courts to international human rights mechanisms.

Internal disciplinary systems are the first line of accountability and the most important in quantitative terms because the vast majority of security force misconduct, if it is to be addressed at all, will be addressed through internal disciplinary rather than external criminal processes. The effectiveness of internal disciplinary systems depends on the institutional commitment to accountability at the command level: if commanders genuinely believe that tolerating abuse will damage their careers and the operational effectiveness of their units, they will enforce discipline; if they believe that covering up abuse protects the institution and their own advancement, they will cover it up.

The development of an independent police oversight commission, insulated from executive direction and with authority to initiate its own investigations, represents the institutional mechanism most likely to provide effective accountability for police abuses. The comparativeexperience of independent police oversight commissions in Jamaica, South Africa, and Northern Ireland suggests that their effectiveness depends critically on three factors: genuine investigative independence, including the authority to compel testimony and document

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

production from police agencies; adequate resources to conduct thorough investigations; and follow-through mechanisms that ensure that their findings and recommendations are not simply ignored by prosecutorial or disciplinary authorities.

Domestic courts are an important accountability mechanism, but their effectiveness in security cases has been severely compromised in Bangladesh by several structural features of the legal system: the judicial delays that mean cases may take a decade or more to reach final verdict; the practical difficulties of obtaining evidence against security force personnel who control the investigation process in their own cases; the reluctance of judges to find against security forces in cases involving national security; and the explicit immunities from prosecution that some security legislation provides.

International human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee Against Torture, and the UN Special Procedures, provide external accountability pressure that has historically been more effective at identifying patterns of abuse than at securing accountability for specific incidents. The value of engagement with these mechanisms is not that they provide enforceable remedies, since they generally cannot, but that they create public records of documented abuse that affect Bangladesh's international reputation and constrain its diplomatic freedom of action in ways that create incentives for domestic reform.

The potential role of the International Criminal Court in providing accountability for the most serious violations of international humanitarian law in the CHT has been discussed but not acted upon, in part because Bangladesh's accession to the Rome Statute, while formally in place, has not been accompanied by the political commitment to engage with the ICC's mechanisms that effective accountability would require.

11.3 Building a Culture of Accountability: The Institutional Reform Agenda

The transformation of Bangladesh's internal security institutions from their current accountability-resistant culture to one in which accountability is genuinely valued requires more than legislative reform: it requires sustained, patient work on the institutional cultures, professional identities, and career incentive structures that shape the daily behavior of security force personnel.

The international comparative literature on police and military culture change identifies several elements that are consistently important in successful reform processes. Strong and consistent leadership commitment to accountability from the top of each institution is essential: if the Inspector General of Police, the Army Chief, and the Director General of RAB publicly and credibly communicate that abuse will not be tolerated and that the institutional culture has changed, this creates permission structures for middle-level commanders to enforce accountability that the previously tolerant culture denied them.

Professional military and police education that includes rigorous and serious human rights content is a necessary element of sustained culture change. The integration of human rights standards, the legal framework for use of force, the ethics of interrogation, and the institutional accountability mechanisms into the core curriculum of officer and senior NCO education at

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

every level creates a professional class that understands these standards as central to their professional identity rather than as externally imposed constraints.

The reform of promotion and career advancement criteria to explicitly include accountability track record, the absence of sustained complaints of abuse, and demonstrated commitment to rule-of-law standards, is a critically important element that is rarely discussed in formal reform proposals but that is essential to changing the behavioral incentives that drive institutional culture.

CHAPTER TWELVE: SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Comprehensive Internal Security Architecture: Key Principles

The analysis developed across eleven chapters converges on a set of key principles that should inform the design of Bangladesh's comprehensive internal security architecture. These principles are not abstract ideals; they are operationally grounded conclusions derived from the specific analysis of Bangladesh's security challenges, its institutional history, its legal obligations, and the comparative experience of states that have addressed similar challenges more or less effectively.

The first principle is integration: internal and external security must be governed within a single strategic framework that acknowledges their interconnection, managed through a National Security Council that provides whole-of-government coordination, and resourced through a comprehensive national security budget that reflects the full range of security requirements.

The second principle is proportionality: security force operations must be limited to what is necessary to address specific, identified threats, and the use of coercive powers, including detention, surveillance, and force, must be calibrated to the threat rather than maximized in pursuit of political or institutional objectives.

The third principle is accountability: every exercise of security power must be subject to meaningful oversight, through institutional accountability mechanisms, judicial oversight, parliamentary scrutiny, and civil society monitoring, and abuses must be investigated, prosecuted, and sanctioned consistently.

The fourth principle is political resolution: the CHT security situation, the Rohingya crisis, and the radicalization problem all have political dimensions that cannot be addressed by security means alone, and security policy must be designed to support rather than substitute for political processes aimed at addressing the underlying grievances that drive security challenges.

The fifth principle is rights-based operations: all security operations must be conducted in accordance with Bangladesh's constitutional and international human rights obligations, and these obligations must be understood not as constraints that reduce security effectiveness but as

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

professional standards whose consistent observance builds the public trust and community cooperation that effective security requires.

12.2 Specific Policy Recommendations

The following specific policy recommendations emerge from the analysis developed in this Part and represent the core prescriptive content of the internal security reform agenda recommended for Bangladesh's consideration.

On CHT peace process implementation: the government should establish a CHT Accord Implementation Commission with a five-year mandate, chaired by a former Chief Justice and including representatives of the CHT Regional Council, the three Hill District Councils, the PCJSS, civil society, and the military, with a mandate to develop and oversee a comprehensive implementation plan for the outstanding provisions of the 1997 Accord. The Commission should be given statutory authority to direct government agencies to take specific actions required for implementation and to report to Parliament on progress on a quarterly basis.

On counter-extremism: the government should reconstitute the Anti-Terrorism Unit as a genuinely independent professional agency, insulated from political direction, with a mandate covering both enforcement and prevention, and with a civilian oversight board reporting to the Home Minister and Parliament. The CVE policy should be comprehensively reviewed and updated, incorporating the lessons of the 2024-2026 period including the post-July 2024 environment, and should be developed through genuine civil society consultation including community leaders, religious authorities, and education experts.

On RAB accountability: the government should establish an independent commission of inquiry into the pattern of extrajudicial killings attributed to RAB, with a mandate to identify specific incidents, assess the evidence, recommend prosecutions where the evidence warrants, and propose the structural reforms necessary to prevent recurrence. The findings of this commission should form the basis for engagement with the United States government on the path toward lifting the 2021 sanctions.

On the Anti-Terrorism Act: the legislation should be comprehensively reformed to narrow the definition of terrorism to exclude non-violent political activity; to repeal or restrict the organizational ban power; to strengthen procedural protections for accused persons; and to include explicit accountability provisions for prosecutors and investigators who bring politically motivated terrorism cases.

On Rohingya camp security: the government should develop a comprehensive camp governance framework that clearly allocates security responsibility, establishes rule of law mechanisms within the camps including a camp justice system, creates economic opportunity through authorized camp-based enterprise, provides education to Rohingya children and young adults, and enables meaningful civil society monitoring of camp conditions. This framework should be developed in consultation with the UNHCR and other international partners with relevant expertise and funding capacity.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

On legislative reform: Parliament should be invited to establish a joint select committee on internal security legislation with a mandate to review the full body of internal security legislation, identify inconsistencies with the Constitution and international obligations, and develop draft legislation for a comprehensive Bangladesh Internal Security Act on the lines proposed in Chapter Ten.

12.3 The Philosophical Foundation: Internal Security as Democratic Service

The final and perhaps most important recommendation is not institutional or legislative but philosophical: Bangladesh's political leaders, security professionals, academics, and civil society must collectively develop a new understanding of internal security as a democratic service rather than as a political instrument or an institutional prerogative.

The democratic conception of internal security begins with the recognition that security is a public good that belongs to all citizens, not a resource that governments deploy for their own benefit or that security institutions manage for their own institutional interests. On the democratic conception, the purpose of every internal security institution, from the police constable in a rural upazila to the counterterrorism analyst in the Anti-Terrorism Unit, is to protect the constitutional rights of Bangladesh's citizens from the threats that violence, whether from state actors, non-state armed groups, criminal networks, or communal violence, poses to those rights.

This philosophical reorientation has specific practical implications. It means that the test of any security operation is not whether it achieves the immediate tactical objective but whether it advances or undermines the constitutional rights of the people affected by it. It means that the accountability mechanisms for security forces are not constraints on security effectiveness but expressions of the democratic relationship between the security state and the citizens it serves. It means that the communities most affected by security force operations, the residents of the CHT, the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, the residents of the areas most affected by drug trafficking and organized crime, are not objects of security but subjects: persons with rights that the security system exists to protect rather than threats that the security system must suppress.

The July Revolution of 2024, whatever its eventual historical verdict, expressed in unmistakable terms the popular rejection of a security architecture that had become an instrument of repression rather than of democratic service. The fundamental task of Bangladesh's internal security reform agenda is to build in its place a security architecture that is genuinely at the service of the Constitution, the law, and the people whose rights both exist to protect.

CONCLUSION TO PART NINE: SECURITY WITHOUT IMPUNITY

The analysis developed across twelve chapters of Part Nine converges on a conclusion that is simultaneously diagnostic, prescriptive, and philosophical: Bangladesh's internal security

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

challenges are not primarily a function of insufficient security capacity, though capability gaps are real and should be addressed. They are primarily a function of a security architecture whose legitimacy has been systematically eroded by decades of abuse, impunity, and political misuse.

The CHT's continued instability, despite an Accord that provided the framework for a durable political settlement, reflects not the failure of the peace process model but the failure of political will to implement it. The persistence of Islamist radicalization, despite genuine operational successes against specific militant organizations, reflects the failure to address the educational, economic, and governance conditions that generate radicalization. The continued human rights abuses by RAB and police, despite formal legal frameworks that prohibit those abuses, reflect the failure of accountability that allows institutional cultures of impunity to persist across political transitions.

Each of these failures has a political rather than a technical root cause. The technical solutions, the legislative reforms, the institutional redesigns, the capability investments, are necessary and important. But they will not deliver durable results unless the political conditions for genuine implementation exist, and those conditions require a different relationship between political leadership and the security establishment than Bangladesh has historically maintained.

The July Revolution created the political opportunity for this different relationship. Whether the post-revolutionary governments, including the BNP government elected in 2026, will seize this opportunity to build a security architecture worthy of a constitutional democracy, or whether they will revert to the familiar pattern of using security powers for political advantage while maintaining formal commitments to reform, is the defining internal security question of Bangladesh's current moment.

The prescription of this textbook is clear: the only path to genuine security in Bangladesh runs through genuine rule of law, genuine accountability, and the genuine political settlement of the conflicts that have sustained armed violence for decades. Security without these foundations is not security but armed domination, and armed domination, as Bangladesh's own history demonstrates with painful clarity, is ultimately more destabilizing than the threats it claims to address.

Part Ten will address the defense industrial policy in its full complexity: the indigenous defense manufacturing base, the dependencies created by reliance on foreign arms suppliers, the political economy of defense procurement, the opportunities and limitations of technology transfer arrangements, and the strategic vision for Bangladesh's defense industrial development through 2040.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART NINE

Conceptual Framework and Theory

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Second Edition. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Loader, Ian and Neil Walker. Civilizing Security. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Stenning, Philip and Clifford Shearing. "The Shifting Boundaries of Policing: Globalisation and its Possibilities." International Review of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 2005.

Arendt, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951.

Schmitt, Carl. The Concept of the Political. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Agamben, Giorgio. State of Exception. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Bangladesh Internal Security: History and Analysis

Ali, S.M. After the Dark Night: Problems of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Thomson Press, 1973.

Riaz, Ali. Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web. London: Routledge, 2008.

Lintner, Bertil. Bangladesh: Land of Opportunity. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2023.

Hossain, Mubashar. Islamist Politics in Bangladesh from Within: Encounters, Interactions, and Perceptions. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Mohsin, Amena. The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003.

Uddin, Nasir. The Ethnic Cleansing of the Rohingyas. London: Routledge, 2019.

Datta, Sreeradha. "Radical Islam in Bangladesh." Strategic Analysis, Volume 35, Number 5, 2011.

Chittagong Hill Tracts: Documents and Analysis

Bangladesh. Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, December 2, 1997.

Bangladesh. Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Act, 1998.

Bangladesh. Chittagong Hill Tracts (Land Dispute Resolution) Commission Act, 2001.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

PCJSS. Annual Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts 2025. Rangamati: PCJSS, 2025.

Ahmed, Nur. "The Recurrence of Security Challenges in Chittagong Hill Tracts: Root Causes." Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies Journal, Volume 46, 2025.

United Nations. Joint Allegation Letters on the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Special Procedures Communications, 2025.

Kapaeeng Foundation. Violence Against Indigenous Women in Bangladesh, Annual Reports 2020-2025. Dhaka, 2025.

UNPO Academy. Between Reform and Repression: Geopolitics and Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, 2026.

Cultural Survival. "Impunity and Indigeneity: Renewed Violence and Denial in Bangladesh's Hill Tracts." October 2025.

Shahriar, Saleh. "Changing Security Dynamics in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts." Eurasia Review, October 14, 2024.

Counter-Extremism and Terrorism

Anti-Terrorism Unit, Bangladesh Police. https://www.police.gov.bd/en/atu_writeup.

Bangladesh. Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009, as amended 2025.

Bangladesh. Anti-Terrorism Unit Rules, 2019.

"Bangladesh Interim Government's Weakened Counterterrorism Approach." The Diplomat, August 6, 2025.

"Bangladesh's Evolving Security Crisis: The Rise of Religious Extremism Amid Political Transition." Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, RSIS, Singapore, 2025.

"Understanding Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Policy of Bangladesh." Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism. Published online July 9, 2025.

UNODC. "Bangladesh: Strengthening Community Policing to Counter Violent Extremism." February 24, 2025.

"Bangladesh: New Crackdown Under Anti-Terrorism Law." Human Rights Watch, October 8, 2025.

"Terrorism in Bangladesh: A Political Tool or a Real Threat?" Connecting Nations, February 15, 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Shoieb, Md. Jahan. "The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Perspective." Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies Journal, Volume 42, Number 3, 2021.

Rohingya Security Nexus

UNHCR. Bangladesh Situation Reports, 2023-2026.

Kipgen, Nehginpao. Crisis in the Rakhine State in Myanmar. London: Routledge, 2019.

Human Rights Watch. "Crackdown on Rohingya: Crimes Against Humanity in Rakhine State." 2020.

"Security Worries for Northeast as Rohingya Militancy Rises in Bangladesh." The Sunday Guardian, March 22, 2026.

Police Reform and Human Rights Accountability

Odhikar. Reports on Extrajudicial Killings in Bangladesh, 2004-2025. Dhaka: Odhikar.

Ain O Salish Kendra. Annual Human Rights Reports, Bangladesh. Dhaka: ASK, 2020-2025.

Amnesty International. "Bangladesh: Caught in the Crossfire." 2011.

Human Rights Watch. "Human Rights Watch Submission to the UPR on Bangladesh." 2022.

United States Department of the Treasury. "Treasury Designates Human Rights Abusers in Bangladesh." Press Release, December 10, 2021.

United Nations Human Rights Committee. General Comments Nos. 29, 31, 35, 36. Geneva: UNHCHR.

United Nations. Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, 1990.

United Nations Committee Against Torture. Concluding Observations on Bangladesh. CAT/C/BGD/CO/1, 2019.

Comparative Internal Security

Northern Ireland Policing Board. Annual Report 2023-24. Belfast, 2024.

South Africa. Independent Police Investigative Directorate. Annual Report 2024-25. Pretoria, 2025.

Brogden, Mike and Clifford Shearing. Policing for a New South Africa. London: Routledge, 1993.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Chalk, Peter and William Rosenau. Confronting the "Enemy Within": Security Intelligence, the Police, and Counterterrorism in Four Democracies. RAND Corporation, 2004.

International Law and Internal Security

Geneva Conventions, 1949, and Additional Protocols, 1977.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.

Dinstein, Yoram. Non-International Armed Conflicts in International Law. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Melzer, Nils. Targeted Killing in International Law. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Sassoli, Marco. International Humanitarian Law: Rules, Controversies, and Solutions to Problems Arising in Warfare. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019.

End of Part Nine

Part Ten will address the defense industrial policy of Bangladesh in its full complexity: the indigenous defense manufacturing base, the political economy of defense procurement and its associated corruption vulnerabilities, the strategic implications of equipment dependencies on specific supplier states, the opportunities and limitations of various technology transfer and offset arrangements, the role of state-owned defense enterprises, the emerging private sector role in defense production, and the strategic vision for Bangladesh's defense industrial development through 2040. The analysis will draw on the full geopolitical and economic framework developed in Parts One through Nine, with specific attention to how Bangladesh can use the defense industrial agenda to simultaneously strengthen its security capabilities, reduce its supply-chain dependencies, support its economic development goals, and manage its relationships with competing major power partners.

Part Ten: Defense Industrial Policy, Procurement Architecture, Technology Transfer, Supply Chain Dependencies, and the Strategic Vision for Bangladesh's Defense Industrial Development Through 2040

First Edition, 2026

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART TEN

Among the most consequential and least publicly discussed dimensions of any state's defense policy is the question of where its weapons come from, who decides what to buy, how those decisions are made and financed, and what the long-term strategic implications are of the dependencies that arms procurement inevitably creates. Parts One through Nine of this textbook have focused primarily on the strategic, doctrinal, constitutional, and internal security dimensions of Bangladesh's defense architecture. Part Ten descends into the material foundations that underpin all of it: the actual equipment, the factories that produce some of it, the suppliers that provide the rest, the money that pays for everything, the political economy that shapes every major procurement decision, and the intellectual vision for what a genuinely autonomous defense industrial base in Bangladesh could one day look like.

This is territory where abstraction collides with hard specificity. A defense policy that does not reckon honestly with the question of what Bangladesh can afford, what it can produce domestically, what it must buy from abroad, from whom, on what terms, with what strategic strings attached, and under what accountability mechanisms, is a policy document that lives in the realm of aspiration rather than operational reality. The gap between aspiration and reality in Bangladesh's defense industrial policy has historically been very wide, and the consequences of that gap, in terms of forces that are under-equipped, improperly maintained, dependent on suppliers who may withhold spare parts at moments of strategic crisis, and insulated from the kind of democratic accountability that competitive, transparent procurement would enable, have been significant.

The period from 2024 to the present writing in 2026 has seen a dramatic acceleration of Bangladesh's defense procurement activity, a profound reorientation of its supplier relationships in the aftermath of the July Revolution, a growing engagement with non-traditional partners including Turkey and Pakistan alongside the longstanding Chinese relationship, and the first serious public discussion of the indigenous defense industrial base as a strategic priority rather than a secondary concern. This Part examines all of these dimensions with the analytical depth, historical grounding, jurisprudential scrutiny, and theoretical sophistication that the textbook has applied throughout.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POLICY

1.1 Why Defense Industrial Policy Is a Distinct Category

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Defense industrial policy occupies a conceptual space that is genuinely distinct from both civilian industrial policy and military procurement management, though it draws on both. Understanding why it is distinct matters because the analytical frameworks appropriate to civilian industries, governed by market efficiency considerations and comparative advantage logic, and the frameworks appropriate to routine government procurement, governed by value-for-money principles and competitive tendering requirements, both fail to capture the full strategic significance of defense production decisions.

The distinctiveness of defense industrial policy derives from the specific characteristics of defense goods and services that set them apart from ordinary economic commodities. Defense goods are in the first instance public goods in the technical economic sense: their production serves collective security that cannot be efficiently provided by market mechanisms because the benefits are non-excludable and non-rivalrous. But they are also strategic goods in a sense that goes beyond ordinary public goods theory: they represent the physical embodiment of a state's capacity for sovereign decision-making in matters of war and peace.

The philosopher of technology Langdon Winner noted in his influential essay "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" that technologies are not politically neutral instruments that happen to be used for particular purposes but are themselves shaped by and expressive of political choices about the distribution of power. Applied to defense industrial policy, Winner's insight generates a powerful analytical lens: the decision to purchase a weapons system from a particular supplier is not merely a procurement decision but a political act that creates dependencies, shapes relationships, constrains future choices, and expresses political values about where Bangladesh positions itself in the global order.

The strategic literature on defense industry is dominated by the concept of the defense technology and industrial base (DTIB), which encompasses not merely the specific defense factories but the full ecosystem of research institutions, educational facilities, skilled workforce, supply chains, and enabling technologies that sustain a state's capacity to develop, produce, and maintain defense equipment. This concept is analytically powerful precisely because it forces attention away from individual procurement decisions toward the systemic question of what industrial ecosystem Bangladesh is building, and whether the decisions of any given year are adding to or subtracting from that ecosystem.

1.2 Classical Economic Theory and Defense Industry: Market Failure, Public Goods, and Strategic Considerations

Classical economic theory provides limited guidance for defense industrial policy because the standard conditions for market efficiency, free entry and exit, perfect information, price as the primary signal, and profit as the primary incentive, are systematically absent in the defense market. The demand side is monopsonistic: for most defense goods, the government is the only buyer, and it brings to the market not merely purchasing power but regulatory authority, classification controls, and the entire apparatus of national security secrecy. The supply side is oligopolistic at best and monopolistic in the most sensitive capability areas: very few firms worldwide have the capability to produce modern submarines, advanced fighter aircraft, or sophisticated missile defense systems, and the barriers to entry are so high that market

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

competition in the ordinary sense does not discipline supplier behavior or allocate resources efficiently.

The market failures that characterize defense procurement justify significant government intervention, but the form that intervention should take is itself contested. The statist tradition, dominant in France, India, and to some extent China, argues for state ownership of the principal defense industrial assets, providing the government with direct control over production, pricing, and strategic direction. The liberal tradition, dominant in the United States and United Kingdom, argues for government as intelligent customer in a privately owned defense industrial base, using competition where feasible to maintain efficiency incentives while accepting the natural monopolies that security requirements impose on the most sensitive capabilities. The developmental state tradition, associated with South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, argues for targeted industrial policy that uses defense procurement to build commercially relevant industrial capabilities, creating defense industries that generate positive spillovers for the broader economy.

Bangladesh's current defense industrial situation most closely resembles a poorly executed version of the statist model: state-owned defense enterprises with limited commercial exposure, bureaucratic management structures, restricted budgets, and no sustained competition from domestic private sector alternatives. The question this Part addresses is whether, and in what direction, Bangladesh should develop its defense industrial policy in a way that is both strategically effective and economically sustainable.

1.3 The Political Economy of Arms Procurement: Principal-Agent Problems and Rent-Seeking

The political economy of defense procurement is one of the most extensively studied examples of principal-agent problems in public choice theory. The principal, the government and ultimately the citizens on whose behalf it acts, wants defense procurement decisions to be made on the basis of military effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and strategic alignment. The agents, the defense ministry officials, military officers, procurement specialists, and political intermediaries involved in the decision-making process, have their own interests that may diverge substantially from the principal's interest.

The specific forms of principal-agent failure in defense procurement are well documented and take several characteristic forms. Career military officers who will retire and seek employment in the defense industry have personal financial incentives to favor procurement decisions that will improve their post-service employment prospects with specific contractors. Defense ministry officials who process procurement decisions may extract rents through the deliberate introduction of procedural complexity that creates opportunities for facilitation payments. Politicians who have constituencies in areas where defense contracts will create employment have electoral incentives to favor those contracts regardless of their military merits. And foreign governments whose defense companies are competing for Bangladeshi contracts have geopolitical incentives to use diplomatic pressure, concessional financing, and other non-market instruments to influence procurement decisions in their suppliers' favor.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The defense procurement corruption problem is not unique to Bangladesh; it is a global phenomenon documented in virtually every country that has engaged in significant defense procurement over the past century. What varies across countries is the degree of institutional insulation from these pressures, the strength of oversight mechanisms, the transparency of the procurement process, and the severity of sanctions for procurement corruption. Bangladesh's record on all four of these dimensions has been weak, with the consequences that procurement decisions have been driven by factors other than military merit more often than the public record reveals, defense spending has generated less military capability per taka spent than comparable countries achieve, and the accountability gap in defense procurement has become one of the most significant governance failures in Bangladesh's overall public sector.

1.4 Arms Dependency Theory: The Structural Consequences of Import Reliance

The theoretical literature on arms dependency, developed by scholars including Andrew Ross, Stephanie Neuman, and Robert Harkavy in the context of arms transfer theory, identifies a set of structural consequences that flow from a state's reliance on foreign arms suppliers that have direct relevance to Bangladesh's strategic situation.

The first consequence is what Ross terms "technological dependency": a state that imports rather than develops defense technology becomes dependent on the supplier's continuing willingness to provide upgrades, spare parts, maintenance training, and technical support. If the supplier withdraws this support, for political reasons or commercial reasons, the importing state's military capability degrades rapidly. The specific danger is that this dependency gives the supplier a degree of political leverage over the importer that extends well beyond the specific defense relationship: a state that fears its weapons will stop working if it displeases its principal supplier has a powerful incentive to avoid diplomatic positions that displease that supplier.

The second consequence is "vulnerability to supply disruption": an importing state faces the risk that at precisely the moment when its weapons are needed most, political or operational considerations may cause the supplier to delay, restrict, or withhold deliveries. India's experience during the 1962 war with China, when American aircraft deliveries were delayed, and Bangladesh's own experience of having Chinese spare parts deliveries complicated by political considerations, illustrate this risk concretely.

The third consequence is "operational doctrine dependency": arms imports do not merely supply platforms but embed, along with those platforms, the operational doctrines, training systems, and tactical assumptions of the supplier state. A military that uses Chinese aircraft, Chinese submarines, Chinese surface combatants, and Chinese artillery will inevitably develop operational habits, training linkages, and tactical assumptions that align its operational thinking with Chinese doctrine, which may or may not be appropriate for Bangladesh's specific strategic environment.

The fourth consequence is what Harkavy calls "enclave industrialization": defense imports prevent the development of domestic industrial capabilities that a genuine defense industrial base would require. Each generation of imported weapons represents a lost opportunity to develop local engineering, manufacturing, and maintenance capabilities, because the technology remains

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

proprietary to the foreign supplier and the associated learning-by-doing effects accrue to the supplier's workforce rather than to Bangladesh's.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

2.1 Origins: The Pakistan Era and the Liberation War Legacy

Bangladesh's defense industrial inheritance at independence in 1971 was, by any measure, extremely limited. The principal defense industrial asset in what became Bangladesh was the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories complex at Gazipur, established in 1968 with Chinese technical and financial assistance to produce small arms and ammunition for the Pakistan Army, and formally inaugurated on April 6, 1970. The facility's operational lifespan under Pakistani administration was barely a year before the Liberation War began; Pakistani forces deliberately damaged it during their occupation, recognizing the Gazipur facility as strategically significant for any future Bangladeshi defense capability.

The Liberation War itself provided both a heroic military founding narrative and a practical lesson in arms dependency. The Mukti Bahini was critically dependent on Indian arms, training, and logistical support, without which the liberation struggle would not have succeeded in the timeframe it did. The Indian military's direct intervention in December 1971, Operation Trident and the larger Eastern Command offensive, was decisive. But the dependency on Indian support, while necessary and ultimately beneficial in achieving liberation, created in the minds of Bangladesh's early strategic planners a deep awareness of the vulnerability that arms dependency represents: a reminder that military capability that depends on another state's willingness to provide it is not truly sovereign capability.

The immediate post-liberation period saw Bangladesh inherit a diverse and largely obsolete weapons inventory assembled from the limited stocks that India provided in the liberation struggle, captured Pakistani equipment of varying condition, weapons supplied by India, the Soviet Union, and other supportive states, and the surviving production capacity of the Gazipur ordnance facilities. This diverse inheritance, which included British, Indian, Soviet, and Chinese weapons systems with incompatible calibers, spare part requirements, and maintenance procedures, was both a logistical nightmare and a structural template that Bangladesh's subsequent arms acquisition policy unfortunately perpetuated rather than rationalized.

2.2 The Chinese Relationship: Arms Supplier, Industrial Partner, and Strategic Complication

China's emergence as Bangladesh's principal arms supplier is one of the defining features of Bangladesh's defense industrial history, and one whose strategic implications have grown more complex with each passing decade. The normalization of Bangladesh-China relations in 1975 following the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had maintained an India-oriented

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

foreign policy and whose government China had refused to recognize, opened the way for the comprehensive defense relationship that has characterized the two countries' military ties ever since.

China offered Bangladesh a combination that was and remains uniquely attractive to a lower-middle-income state seeking to modernize its military forces: substantial weapons systems at prices significantly below comparable Western alternatives, concessional financing arrangements that allowed procurement without immediate foreign exchange impact, a political non-conditionality that explicitly refused to link arms transfers to Bangladesh's domestic governance or human rights record, and over time an increasing willingness to transfer production technology for lower-tier systems that enabled some degree of indigenous manufacturing.

The weapons systems that China has supplied to Bangladesh over five decades of defense cooperation span the full spectrum of military capability: F-7 and later F-7BG/F-7MB fighter aircraft for the Air Force; Type 035G submarines, Type 053H3 frigates, Type 056 corvettes, and various patrol vessels for the Navy; Type 59, Type 62, and Type 69 main battle tanks for the Army together with artillery systems, multiple rocket launchers, and surface-to-surface missile systems; and increasingly sophisticated electronic systems, radar networks, and air defense equipment. The comprehensiveness of this supply relationship means that Bangladesh's military, at the equipment level, is substantially Chinese in character, with Chinese operational assumptions, Chinese maintenance requirements, and Chinese training linkages embedded throughout.

The strategic complications that flow from this depth of supply relationship are substantial and have received increasing analytical attention following the geopolitical realignments of 2024-2026. The first complication is operational: a military that uses Chinese submarines, Chinese aircraft, Chinese surface combatants, and Chinese ground force equipment has an operational profile that is broadly readable by Chinese strategic planners in ways that create asymmetric intelligence advantages. Bangladesh's military is, in a technical doctrinal sense, more transparent to Chinese strategic assessment than it is to the assessment of any other power, because the Chinese defense establishment designed and supplied the equipment and wrote the original maintenance manuals and training curricula.

The second complication is procurement leverage. China's position as Bangladesh's principal arms supplier gives Beijing political leverage that can be exercised whenever Bangladesh's foreign policy choices displease Chinese strategic interests. The withdrawal of Chinese spare parts support, or the delay in scheduled deliveries, represents a form of coercive diplomacy that does not require any overt military action and leaves limited diplomatic trace. The specifics of Chinese leverage over Bangladeshi defense procurement decisions in any specific case are necessarily obscure given the classified character of most procurement negotiations, but the structural logic is clear and well understood by Bangladesh's defense planners.

The third complication is the technology dependency dynamic described in Section 1.4 above. The Chinese equipment that Bangladesh operates is not merely hardware; it is a technological ecosystem that requires a continuing supply relationship with China for upgrades, ammunition supply, spare parts, depot-level maintenance, and the periodic re-certification of systems that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

occurs in the normal course of military operational management. Bangladesh cannot independently maintain its Chinese weapons systems beyond a certain level of complexity, because the specialized tools, technical data packages, and trained Chinese technicians that depot-level maintenance requires are proprietary to the supplier.

2.3 The Russia Factor: Declining Relationship, Sanction Risk, and Doctrinal Complication

Russia's role as a defense supplier to Bangladesh has been more limited than China's but strategically significant in specific capability domains. The MiG-29 fighters that form one element of the Bangladesh Air Force's combat aviation capability represent the most operationally significant Russian supply relationship, as does the Yak-130 advanced jet trainer that serves as the primary platform for producing combat-qualified pilots for the BAF's jet fleet.

The strategic complications of the Russian supply relationship have become significantly more acute since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the comprehensive Western sanctions regime that followed. The sanctions imposed on Russia's defense industry, and on the state entities that manage Russia's arms exports, create significant risks for Bangladesh in any procurement relationship that involves Russian systems or components: the risk of secondary sanctions, the risk of spare parts and maintenance supply disruption, and the risk that financial transactions required to sustain the Russian supply relationship will become legally and operationally problematic.

Bangladesh's decision to accelerate its diversification away from Russian defense systems, while not publicly stated in terms that acknowledge the sanctions risk directly, reflects a rational strategic calculation about the unsustainability of maintaining a significant military relationship with a supplier whose defense industrial base is under comprehensive international sanctions. The MiG-29 fleet, already aging and operationally limited by maintenance challenges, has become a liability rather than an asset, and the replacement programs described in subsequent chapters of this Part must be understood in part as a response to the Russian supply relationship's growing strategic costs.

2.4 The Emergence of the Domestic Defense Industrial Base: From Ammunition to Ambition

Bangladesh's domestic defense industrial base, as it exists in 2026, is an institutional ecosystem that has grown steadily though not dramatically from the Gazipur ordnance factory's origins in 1970. The four principal state-owned defense enterprises that constitute the core of this base are the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, the Bangladesh Diesel Plant, and Khulna Shipyard, each of which has a distinct production focus and a different level of industrial capability.

The Bangladesh Army proudly showcased a wide range of domestically manufactured defence products at the World Defence Show 2026 in Riyadh, highlighting equipment produced by the Army's own manufacturing establishments: Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, Bangladesh Diesel Plant, Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, and the Sena Kalyan Sangstha. Among the key

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

items exhibited were locally manufactured assault rifles, explosives, and various types of munitions produced by Bangladesh Ordnance Factories. Bdmilitary

The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories at Gazipur represent the most developed element of the domestic defense industrial base. BOF's current production capabilities include the BD-08 assault rifle and its variants, which have become the standard service rifle of the Bangladesh Army and other security forces; a range of small arms ammunition in the calibers used by Bangladesh's various weapons platforms; grenades and explosives; mortar rounds; and, following the 2021 technology transfer agreement with Turkey's REPKON company, a production line for 105mm and 155mm artillery shells using Free Flowforming technology that represents a meaningful step toward indigenous production of high-caliber conventional munitions. The RPG-7 production program announced in November 2025, through which BOF is establishing indigenous production of rocket-propelled grenade systems and their associated ammunition, represents a further diversification of BOF's product range into light anti-armor systems.

The BOF's expansion plan for the period 2025 to 2035 represents the most ambitious articulation of indigenous defense production ambition that Bangladesh has yet produced. The plan envisions the transformation of BOF from its current role as a producer of small arms, ammunition, and basic explosives into a diversified military-industrial complex capable of producing guided and unguided missile systems, anti-tank guided weapons, man-portable air defense systems, and precision-guided munitions. Whether these ambitions can be realized within the planned timeframe depends on multiple factors, including sustained government funding, the availability of appropriate technology transfer agreements with willing supplier states, the development of the skilled workforce that advanced production requires, and the development of a civilian industrial ecosystem with the dual-use technology base that defense production needs.

The Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, established with the original mandate of supporting small industrial enterprises with metal fabrication capability, has evolved into a producer of tactical wheeled vehicles, armored personnel carriers in licensed versions of Chinese designs, and military logistics equipment. Its commercialization, which has made it one of the largest commercial enterprises in Bangladesh with a substantial civilian market share alongside its defense production, provides both a financial base that partially reduces defense subsidy requirements and a model for the dual-use industrial development strategy that this Part recommends.

Khulna Shipyard is the most significant naval-industrial asset in Bangladesh's defense industrial base, with a capability for the construction and repair of patrol vessels, auxiliary ships, and smaller combatants that represents a genuine industrial achievement in a country whose shipbuilding sector is otherwise focused on commercial merchant vessels. The Bangladesh Navy has increasingly used Khulna Shipyard and the Chittagong Dry Dock as construction venues for smaller naval units, developing the experience base and engineering workforce that larger indigenous warship programs would eventually require.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER THREE: THE CONTEMPORARY PROCUREMENT LANDSCAPE, 2024 TO 2026

3.1 The Fighter Aircraft Decision: History, Politics, and Strategic Stakes

No procurement decision in Bangladesh's defense history has been as complex, as politically charged, as strategically consequential, or as publicly debated as the long-deferred decision on replacing the Bangladesh Air Force's aging fleet of Chinese-built F-7 fighters. This decision, which has been in various stages of analysis, tender, cancellation, and restart for over a decade, illustrates with almost pedagogical clarity every dimension of the defense procurement challenge: the technical complexity of selecting among competing platforms with very different capability profiles; the political economy of competing supplier states using diplomatic and financial instruments to influence the outcome; the fiscal constraints that limit Bangladesh's options; the strategic implications of choosing a Chinese, Pakistani, European, or American platform; and the institutional capacity limitations that have repeatedly prevented the procurement process from reaching a final decision.

The Bangladesh Air Force's F-7BG/MB fleet, which consists of approximately three dozen aircraft in various marks, represents an improved version of the Soviet-era MiG-21 design. These aircraft, despite incremental avionics upgrades over their operational lives, are by any contemporary standard seriously obsolete: their avionics are inadequate for beyond-visual-range engagements, their radar systems are limited, their weapons integration is restricted to older missile types, and their airframes have accumulated significant fatigue hours through decades of operational use that has included a troubling number of fatal accidents. The BAF's small force of MiG-29 fighters, while more capable, suffers from the maintenance and spare parts challenges of the Russian supply relationship described in Section 2.3.

The formal requirement under Forces Goal 2030 calls for the procurement of between twenty and thirty-two fourth-generation or fourth-plus generation multirole combat aircraft to replace the F-7 fleet, with the operational requirement including beyond-visual-range air combat capability, ground attack precision strike capability, and compatibility with Bangladesh's emerging air defense architecture. The budget framework for this procurement has been contested: the 2021 European tender process allocated approximately 2.5 billion euros for sixteen advanced multirole aircraft, a figure that in practice limits the field to second-tier Western offers or non-Western alternatives. The Dassault Rafale at over 125 million dollars per unit and the Eurofighter Typhoon at approximately 120 million dollars are beyond Bangladesh's realistic acquisition budget for the quantities required, though both have been explored.

In 2025, Dhaka began a process to acquire 20 Chengdu J-10CE fighters under a contract valued at about 2.2 billion dollars, with deliveries planned to conclude by 2027 and payments extending into the mid-2030s, while also signing a letter of intent in December 2025 related to a potential Eurofighter Typhoon acquisition. Army Recognition

The January 2026 engagement with Pakistan on the JF-17 represents the most operationally and geopolitically significant procurement development in this space. The potential agreement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

gained decisive strategic momentum during the January 2026 visit of Bangladesh Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan to Islamabad, where his engagements with Pakistan Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu marked the most consequential air force-level interaction between the two states since 1971, reflecting a pragmatic recalibration of defence ties driven by operational necessity rather than historical inertia. Defence Security Asia

The strategic logic behind both the J-10CE and JF-17 Block III options, and the simultaneous exploration of the Eurofighter, reflects a deliberate hedging strategy designed to keep multiple suppliers competing while Bangladesh's procurement decision-makers assess the full range of strategic, operational, financial, and political implications. This multi-track approach has the advantage of maintaining competitive pressure and providing real options but the disadvantage of creating institutional uncertainty that delays decision and extends the BAF's operational capability gap.

The comparative operational analysis of the competing platforms deserves careful treatment because the platform selection decision will shape the BAF's operational character, its supplier dependencies, and its strategic alignment signals for at least two decades.

The Chengdu J-10CE is China's latest export variant of the J-10C multirole fighter, a single-engine aircraft with an AESA radar, PL-10 short-range and PL-15 long-range air-to-air missiles, and a comprehensive suite of ground attack munitions. Its selection would maintain and deepen the China supply relationship while providing a genuinely capable fourth-plus generation platform. The strategic cost is continuation and deepening of the Chinese technology dependency and the political signal that Bangladesh's post-July Revolution reorientation does not extend to its principal defense supply relationship.

The JF-17 Thunder Block III, co-developed by Pakistan's PAC and China's Chengdu Aircraft Corporation, occupies a different niche: it is lighter, cheaper, and simpler than the J-10CE, optimized for the export market of states seeking affordable 4.5-generation capability. Costing between 15 and 25 million dollars per unit, the JF-17 Block III offers features such as an Active Electronically Scanned Array radar, support for beyond-visual-range missiles, and precision-guided munitions. Army Recognition Its selection would diversify Bangladesh's combat aviation away from Chinese-origin platforms while maintaining Chinese-origin technology in the avionics and propulsion (the WS-13 engine is Chinese despite the Pakistan-origin airframe). Nigeria, Myanmar, and Azerbaijan have already grounded JF-17 aircraft due to structural flaws and engine issues. Apart from structural flaws, the JF-17 aircraft's KLJ-7A AESA radar is plagued by overheating issues and shuts down in-flight to cool down. Global Defense Corp These operational reliability concerns deserve serious engineering scrutiny before any final commitment is made.

The Eurofighter Typhoon represents the highest-performance option and the deepest strategic realignment signal: its procurement would represent Bangladesh's most significant turn toward Western defense partnership in its history. The operational capability premium is real and substantial, but so is the cost, both financial and in terms of the strategic message it sends to China and Russia about the direction of Bangladesh's alignment. The Italy connection being

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

reportedly pursued, with Italian defence experts confirming Eurofighter purchase discussions as of April 2026, suggests that a financing mechanism may be available that reduces the immediate foreign exchange impact.

The strategic analysis framework appropriate to the fighter aircraft decision is not "which aircraft is technically best" in isolation but "which combination of capability, cost, supplier relationship, strategic signal, and industrial engagement terms best serves Bangladesh's comprehensive strategic interests." On this more complete framework, the answer is genuinely complex and depends on assumptions about the strategic environment that are inherently uncertain.

3.2 The Air Defense Architecture: Turkey's SiPER and the Regional Implications

The potential acquisition of Turkey's SiPER long-range air defense system represents perhaps the most strategically significant single procurement decision in the current cycle, because it would for the first time give Bangladesh a credible long-range air defense capability that could deny adversary aircraft and missiles access to significant portions of Bangladesh's airspace.

A landmark defense deal with Turkey is in its final stages, an agreement that will see Dhaka acquire the SiPER long-range air defense system and potentially co-produce Turkish combat drones. For Bangladesh, this is about buying sovereignty. For Turkey, it's about projecting power. Asia Times

The strategic logic of the Turkey-Bangladesh air defense partnership is sophisticated and multi-layered, and it merits the detailed analysis that this chapter provides. At the capability level, the combination of the medium-range Hisar-O+ and the long-range SiPER systems would create for the first time an integrated layered air defense architecture capable of engaging targets from very low altitude up to high-altitude aircraft and cruise missiles, covering a significant geographic area of Bangladesh's territory and maritime approaches.

At the diplomatic level, Turkey's entry into Bangladesh's defense supplier relationship represents precisely the diversification that Bangladesh's strategic balancing doctrine demands. Turkey is simultaneously a NATO member with Western technology standards and supply chains, a regional power with strategic interests in South Asia that do not directly compete with Bangladesh's core interests, a state with a policy of defense industrial self-sufficiency that inclines it toward genuine technology transfer rather than perpetual customer dependency, and a Muslim-majority democracy with political and cultural ties to Bangladesh that provide a diplomatic framework for the relationship.

Turkey has indicated willingness to provide limited technology transfer and co-production opportunities to partner nations, particularly those with emerging defence industries. One of the most consequential aspects of the deal could be its industrial dimension. Defence Security Asia The co-production dimension is arguably more strategically significant than the platform acquisition itself, because it represents an investment in Bangladesh's own defense industrial capability rather than merely a purchase of foreign hardware. The drone co-production elements reportedly under discussion, which would involve joint manufacturing of Bayraktar-class

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

unmanned combat aerial vehicles in Bangladesh, represent a potential entry point into one of the most rapidly developing areas of contemporary military technology.

The regional implications of the Turkey-Bangladesh defense partnership have been analyzed extensively. India's informal obstruction of Bangladesh's defense modernization efforts has inadvertently driven Dhaka closer to China, Russia, and other emerging defense partners. As Bangladesh seeks to upgrade its air and naval capabilities amid rising Indo-Pacific tensions, India's hesitancy, conditionality, and strategic suspicion have created a vacuum it cannot yet fill. ResearchGate

The SiPER deal also confronts an important technical challenge that honest assessment must acknowledge. Turkey has only recently begun inducting SiPER into its own inventory, making rapid export delivery to Bangladesh highly improbable in the near term. TURDEF The delivery timeline of late 2026 for Hisar-O+ batteries and 2027-2028 for SiPER systems represents an optimistic estimate that depends on Turkey's domestic induction schedule, the production capacity available for export, and the training and infrastructure development that Bangladesh's operational use of these systems requires.

3.3 Naval Procurement: Indigenous Frigates, Submarine Expansion, and Blue Economy Protection

Bangladesh's naval procurement program represents a more advanced stage of integration between indigenous production and foreign procurement than the air force program, reflecting both the lower technological barriers to entry for naval production at the lower end of the capability spectrum and the longer planning horizon that has allowed the Bangladesh Navy to develop a more coherent industrial engagement strategy.

The two Type 035G Ming-class submarines that constitute Bangladesh's submarine force are the most strategically significant platforms in the Bangladesh Navy's inventory, both because of their operational capability and because of what their acquisition signaled in 2013 about Bangladesh's strategic ambitions. Submarines are qualitative force multipliers that create uncertainty in adversary operational planning and impose significant costs on any military force attempting to project power in contested waters. Their operation also requires the most sophisticated set of training, maintenance, and support arrangements in any naval force, and Bangladesh's ability to sustain the operational capability of these submarines is a direct function of its access to Chinese maintenance support.

The indigenous frigate program at Khulna Shipyard represents an ambitious aspiration to develop Bangladesh's naval-industrial capacity beyond its current patrol vessel competence. The technical gap between constructing a 500-ton offshore patrol vessel and a 3,000-ton guided missile frigate is enormous, encompassing not merely hull construction but weapons integration, sensor suite installation, propulsion plant engineering, combat management system integration, and the complex testing and trials process that verifies an integrated weapons platform's operational readiness. Bridging this gap will require sustained technology transfer from a willing partner, a level of investment in Khulna Shipyard's engineering infrastructure that exceeds

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

anything yet committed, and probably a decade of building progressively larger and more complex vessels before genuine indigenous frigate construction is achievable.

The UK-Bangladesh agreement signed in early 2026 for the transfer of the hydrographic survey vessel HMS Enterprise represents a different dimension of naval industrial engagement: capability transfer through the donation or sale of existing platforms combined with the training and institutional development that sustained operation of sophisticated vessels requires. HMS Enterprise brings both a specific operational capability and a body of institutional knowledge about advanced naval systems management that will contribute to the Bangladesh Navy's long-term development.

3.4 Army Equipment and the Ground Forces Modernization Challenge

The Bangladesh Army's equipment procurement challenge is in some respects simpler than the air force and navy challenges because the technological threshold for effective ground forces, while high, is lower than the threshold for competitive combat aviation or blue-water naval operations. Bangladesh's army already operates a credible, if aging, force of main battle tanks, artillery systems, armored infantry fighting vehicles, and indirect fire systems that gives it a genuine military deterrence capability against the most likely regional threats.

The SY-400 precision surface-to-surface missile system that Bangladesh acquired from China represents a significant enhancement of the Army's ability to strike targets at ranges that previously required air power, and its acquisition reduces one of the most asymmetric capability gaps between Bangladesh and larger neighbors. The system's procurement, reportedly confirmed in November 2025, signals a willingness to invest in precision conventional deterrence rather than accepting the offensive disadvantage that Bangladesh's smaller military size would otherwise imply.

The Turkish T-129 ATAK attack helicopter acquisition reportedly under discussion would provide the Army Aviation Corps with a modern rotary-wing close air support capability that currently does not exist. The T-129, derived from the AgustaWestland A129 Mangusta with substantial Turkish-indigenous systems integration by TAI and ASELSAN, represents a genuinely capable platform with combat experience from Turkish operations in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. Its acquisition would continue the Turkey-Bangladesh defense industrial partnership into the ground forces domain.

The domestic production of RPG-7 systems by BOF, announced in November 2025, represents an incremental but symbolically important step: infantry-portable anti-armor systems are among the most widely deployed weapons in contemporary insurgent and conventional warfare, and their indigenous production reduces the operational vulnerability that dependence on foreign supply creates for units deployed in potentially contested environments.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEFENSE ECONOMIC ZONE AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR ROLE

4.1 The Defense Economic Zone Initiative: Rationale, Design, and Challenges

In 2025, the government initiated the establishment of a specialized Defense Economic Zone to foster public-private partnerships and attract foreign investment from countries such as Turkey and China. This program aims to increase self-sufficiency in drone production and electronics. Global Military This initiative represents, in conceptual terms, one of the most important departures from Bangladesh's historically statist approach to defense industry, because it explicitly acknowledges a role for private sector investment, foreign partner investment, and commercially oriented management in what has previously been an exclusively state-owned domain.

The rationale for the Defense Economic Zone draws on the global experience of states that have used special economic zones as instruments for focused industrial development. The zone model concentrates infrastructure investment, provides tax incentives and regulatory simplifications, and creates geographic clusters where specialized skills, supplier networks, and knowledge spillovers can develop. Applied to defense industry, these zone characteristics are particularly valuable because the specific skills and supply chains required for defense production, precision machining, electronics integration, advanced materials processing, testing and quality assurance to military standards, differ from those required for commercial manufacturing and need to be developed in a focused way.

The challenge for Bangladesh's Defense Economic Zone is to balance two partially competing objectives: attracting the foreign partners and investments that provide the technology access and production know-how that Bangladesh's domestic industry lacks, and ensuring that the knowledge transfer actually occurs rather than remaining in the hands of foreign joint venture partners who have commercial incentives to protect their proprietary technology.

The international experience of states that have pursued joint venture-based defense industrial development suggests that the terms of technology transfer agreements are the critical determinant of whether local industrial capability actually develops. Joint ventures that require significant local content from the outset, that include explicit provisions for the progressive transfer of design rights and manufacturing know-how to local partners, and that are structured to ensure that local engineers and technicians work alongside foreign specialists at every stage of production, generate genuine industrial capability development. Joint ventures that merely require a domestic minority partner, that allow foreign companies to maintain full proprietary control of critical technology, and that use local labor primarily for low-skill assembly operations, generate employment but not industrial capability.

4.2 The Drone Sector: Bangladesh's Most Promising Industrial Entry Point

Among all the potential entry points for Bangladesh's defense industrial development, the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) sector deserves the most focused analytical attention because it

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

combines the most favorable combination of industrial accessibility, commercial applicability, rapidly evolving technology that levels the playing field with more established producers, and strategic military significance.

The global UAV market is one of the fastest-growing segments of the defense industry, driven by the demonstrated operational utility of unmanned systems in conflicts from the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020 through the Ukraine conflict that began in 2022, the operational experience accumulated by Turkey in Syria, Libya, and Azerbaijan, and the rapid development of commercially derived drone technology that has reduced the cost and increased the availability of surveillance and strike systems that previously required dedicated military production lines.

Bangladesh has a commercial drone industry that, while small by global standards, provides a foundation of engineering skills and manufacturing experience relevant to military UAV development. The co-production arrangements reportedly under discussion with Baykar, the Turkish company that produces the Bayraktar TB2 and the more capable Akinci, could provide the technology transfer pathway through which this commercial base can be developed into a genuine military UAV production capability.

The NCP manifesto proposals for a UAV Brigade within the Bangladesh Army, reported in January 2026, reflect an operational appreciation of UAV potential that, if translated into a serious acquisition and industrial program, could make Bangladesh a meaningful contributor to UAV technology in the regional market. The dual-use character of UAV technology, its applicability to surveillance, maritime patrol, disaster response, and commercial delivery alongside its military applications, makes investment in UAV industrial capability particularly attractive from a development economics perspective.

4.3 The Shipbuilding Sector: Commercial Assets and Military Applications

Bangladesh's commercial shipbuilding sector is one of the country's genuine industrial successes: Bangladesh became the third-largest shipbuilder in the world by order volume in the early 2010s, with a cluster of large commercial yards at Chittagong capable of building vessels of up to 30,000 deadweight tons. The skills base, the manufacturing infrastructure, and the quality management systems developed in the commercial shipbuilding sector are directly applicable to military naval construction at the small and medium vessel level, and represent a genuine competitive advantage in the defense industrial field.

The challenge is converting commercial shipbuilding capability into military shipbuilding capability at progressively higher levels of complexity. Commercial vessels are designed for economic efficiency: maximum carrying capacity, fuel economy, and durability in civilian operating conditions. Naval vessels are designed for survivability in combat conditions, platform for weapons and sensor integration, damage control in hostile environments, and crew accommodation for extended operational deployments. The engineering disciplines are related but distinct, and the transition from commercial to military construction requires sustained investment in the specific naval architecture, combat systems integration, and test and evaluation capabilities that military shipbuilding demands.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh Navy's progressive engagement of Khulna Shipyard and Chittagong Dry Dock for construction of naval vessels of increasing complexity is the appropriate strategy for developing this military shipbuilding capability in a sustainable way. Each successive vessel constructed at domestic yards should be designed to stretch the yards' capabilities slightly beyond what they have previously achieved, in a deliberate program of industrial learning-by-doing that builds toward genuine frigate construction capability over a 10 to 15 year horizon.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROCUREMENT GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5.1 The Procurement Architecture: Legal Framework and Institutional Gaps

Bangladesh's defense procurement governance framework is, in formal terms, governed by the Public Procurement Act of 2006 and the Public Procurement Rules of 2008, which establish the general principles of competitive tendering, value for money, transparency, and accountability that apply to all government procurement. In practice, however, defense procurement has operated substantially outside these formal governance frameworks, through a combination of security-related exemptions from competitive tendering requirements, classified procurement channels that are invisible to ordinary oversight mechanisms, and the exercise of ministerial discretion that the procurement rules allow for national security-related procurement.

The security exemptions from competitive procurement requirements that exist in every country's procurement legislation are justified in principle, because genuine operational security concerns sometimes prevent the public disclosure of specific capabilities being procured, the quantities being acquired, or the supplier relationships being developed. But these exemptions, in Bangladesh's institutional context, have been systematically applied much more broadly than genuine security considerations require, providing a blanket cover for procurement decisions that are driven by political preference, supplier lobbying, or outright corruption rather than by legitimate security concerns.

The institutional mechanisms that should provide oversight of defense procurement, including the Parliamentary Defence Committee, the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Ministry of Finance's budget scrutiny function, have historically been unable to exercise effective oversight of defense procurement decisions, for a combination of reasons including the classification of relevant documents, the technical complexity of defense equipment assessment that most parliamentarians and audit officials lack the expertise to navigate, and the political pressures that make scrutiny of defense procurement politically sensitive in ways that routine procurement audit is not.

5.2 Comparative Models of Defense Procurement Governance

The comparative literature on defense procurement governance identifies several models that have achieved varying degrees of success in balancing the genuine security requirements of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

defense procurement confidentiality with the democratic accountability requirements of effective public oversight.

The United Kingdom's model, which has undergone multiple reforms since the Smart Procurement initiative of 1998 through the Gates reforms of 2009 and subsequent iterations, is built around a combination of the Defence Equipment and Support organization that provides professional procurement management, the Defence Equipment Plan that publishes a ten-year capability program in publicly accessible form, and the National Audit Office that exercises rigorous independent scrutiny of major defense programs. The UK model is not perfect, with the Nimrod MRA4 program and various armored vehicle programs providing documented examples of very serious procurement failures, but the institutional mechanisms for identifying failures and making changes are reasonably robust.

The Australian model, following the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, emphasizes capability-focused planning, cost realism at the outset of major programs, and the integration of the acquisition program with the force design framework in ways that prevent the decoupling of strategy from budget that allows major programs to become unaffordable fantasies. Australia's willingness to cancel programs that fail to meet capability or cost requirements, even after significant investment, reflects an institutional culture of procurement discipline that is essential to effective defense investment management.

India's defense procurement reform, which has produced the Defence Acquisition Procedure framework with its "Make in India" categorizations, represents the most directly relevant comparative experience for Bangladesh because it shows how a developing country with significant domestic industrial aspirations has attempted to use defense procurement policy as an instrument of industrial development. The Make in India preferences, which require specified levels of domestic content in defense procurement and channel government procurement toward Indian producers, have produced genuine industrial development in some areas while creating significant efficiency costs in others. The lessons for Bangladesh are both positive, confirming that procurement policy can drive industrial development, and cautionary, showing the importance of realistic assessment of domestic industrial capability before committing to domestic sourcing requirements that the industry cannot yet meet.

5.3 The Defense Finance Framework: Budget Reality and Procurement Constraints

The Bangladesh defense budget, which for fiscal year 2025-26 stands at approximately Tk 40,698 crore (approximately 4 billion dollars), represents a severe constraint on Bangladesh's procurement ambitions that no amount of strategic vision or industrial policy enthusiasm can override. This budget, approximately 1.3 percent of GDP, is well below the NATO guideline of 2 percent that has been broadly adopted as a benchmark for security adequacy, and reflects both the competing budget pressures of development spending, social services, and debt service, and the historical underinvestment in defense that Bangladesh's governments of all political persuasions have consistently chosen to make.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The financing of major procurement programs in this budget context requires a combination of domestic budget allocation and foreign commercial credit. Bangladesh's experience with foreign commercial defense credits has been complex: the Chinese concessional loan packages that have financed many major procurement programs, including the submarine acquisition, create long-term debt service obligations that constrain future budget flexibility and that carry the political implications of financial dependency analyzed in Chapter One.

The IMF program under which Bangladesh has been operating, following the balance of payments crisis of 2022-2023, imposes fiscal discipline requirements that constrain the expansion of defense spending even where the strategic case for increased investment is compelling. The IMF's concerns about Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves, its inflation trajectory, and its debt sustainability are not easily dismissed by reference to defense requirements, and any major new defense procurement commitment must be assessed in terms of its macroeconomic implications alongside its military merits.

The practical implication is that Bangladesh's defense procurement decision-makers must develop a more sophisticated approach to financing major programs than the historical approach of accepting whatever financing package the preferred supplier offers. This requires engagement with the Ministry of Finance that treats defense financing as an integral part of defense procurement planning rather than a downstream problem to be solved after capabilities are committed to, and it requires developing Bangladesh's own financial analysis capability to compare the lifecycle costs of different procurement options rather than focusing exclusively on acquisition cost.

CHAPTER SIX: ARMS DEPENDENCY, SUPPLY CHAIN VULNERABILITIES, AND STRATEGIC RESILIENCE

6.1 Mapping Bangladesh's Supply Chain Dependencies

A comprehensive mapping of Bangladesh's current defense supply chain dependencies reveals a pattern of concentration that creates specific strategic vulnerabilities. China provides the great majority of Bangladesh's major weapons platforms: its fighters, its submarines, its principal surface combatants, its main battle tanks, its principal artillery systems, and a significant portion of its electronic warfare and radar systems. Russia provides the MiG-29 fighters and the Yak-130 trainers, together with some residual ammunition supply for Russian-caliber weapons. Turkey is becoming an increasingly significant supplier in the air defense and unmanned systems domains. Pakistan is emerging as a potential supplier of combat aircraft. The United States provides some logistics equipment, C-130 transport aircraft, and training support. The United Kingdom has historically provided some naval equipment and training.

The concentration of the principal combat platforms supply with China creates exactly the strategic vulnerability described in the arms dependency theory of Section 1.4. If China were to restrict spare parts supply to Bangladesh's F-7 fleet, Type 035 submarines, Type 053H3 frigates,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

or tank force, the operational effectiveness of these systems would degrade significantly within months and become critically impaired within two to three years, because the maintenance cycles of complex military equipment require regular infusions of consumable parts, lubricants, and occasionally more substantial components whose procurement from alternative sources is prevented by the proprietary character of Chinese military equipment design.

The strategic question is what degree of dependency is acceptable and what level of diversification is achievable within Bangladesh's budget constraints. The answer cannot be "zero dependency," because complete defense industrial autarky is available only to states with industrial bases orders of magnitude larger than Bangladesh's. The answer also cannot be "accept whatever level of dependency the cheapest procurement option entails," because the strategic costs of the resulting dependencies may exceed the financial savings they generate. The appropriate answer is a calibrated diversification strategy that accepts Chinese supply relationships for systems already in the inventory while progressively building alternative supplier relationships for new acquisitions and developing domestic production capability for the specific categories of equipment where domestic production is technically feasible and strategically valuable.

6.2 The Lesson of May 2025: India-Pakistan and Its Bangladesh Implications

The India-Pakistan air conflict of May 2025, described in various accounts as the most intense military exchange between the two nuclear-armed neighbors in nearly three decades, has profound implications for Bangladesh's defense industrial policy that have not yet been fully integrated into official analysis.

The conflict, triggered by the Pahalgam attack in Indian-administered Kashmir and India's subsequent Operation Sindoor, demonstrated several things simultaneously relevant to Bangladesh's procurement calculus. It demonstrated the operational effectiveness of Chinese-origin equipment in a combat environment, with Pakistan's J-10CE fighters and JF-17s reportedly performing creditably in engagements with Indian Air Force aircraft. It demonstrated the maturation of China's air defense and missile technology exports to the point where they can contest air superiority with nominally superior Western-equipped opponents. It also created a political realignment in which Bangladesh's emerging defense relationship with Pakistan gained domestic political momentum in the context of what some Bangladeshi commentators described as Indian strategic overreach.

Pakistan has been seeking to expand defense exports following its air force's operational experience during the May 2025 conflict with India, described as the most serious fighting between the two countries in nearly three decades. Officials see defence exports not only as a growing revenue stream, reportedly approaching 10 billion dollars in 2025, but also as a tool of strategic influence. Aerospace Global News

From Bangladesh's perspective, the May 2025 conflict is a reminder that the security environment within which Bangladesh operates is more volatile and less predictable than official optimism tends to assume, and that the capability investments Bangladesh makes in 2026 may be

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

tested in operational conditions within a much shorter timeframe than the thirty-year planning horizons that defense industrial development requires.

6.3 Offset Policies and Technology Transfer: Maximizing Industrial Returns from Procurement

Offset policies in defense procurement, which require foreign suppliers to provide specified economic benefits to the purchasing country as a condition of contract award, represent one of the most powerful instruments available to Bangladesh for converting defense procurement expenditure into domestic industrial development. Offsets take many forms: direct offsets, which involve co-production, licensed production, or subcontracting of components of the procured system; indirect offsets, which involve supplier investments in unrelated domestic industries; technology transfer agreements, which provide Bangladesh's defense establishments with access to the technology used in procured systems; and training and capacity building provisions, which develop the human capital in Bangladesh's defense industry and armed forces.

The international experience with offset policies is mixed. On the positive side, South Korea's offset policy for its F-15K purchase, which required Boeing to provide extensive aerospace technology transfer and co-production of major airframe components, was a significant contributor to the development of Korea Aerospace Industries as a globally competitive aerospace manufacturer. Malaysia's offset policy for its Gripen evaluation included significant technology transfer provisions. On the negative side, many defense offset programs have produced nominal compliance with local content requirements without genuine technology transfer, with foreign contractors finding ways to meet offset targets through trivial activities that do not contribute to the development of indigenous capability.

The design of effective offset policies for Bangladesh requires several specific features. The offset requirement should be expressed as a percentage of contract value, typically 30 to 50 percent for major platform acquisitions, with the required activities precisely specified rather than left to supplier discretion. Technology transfer offsets should be specifically identified in terms of the specific technologies to be transferred, the specific training programs required, the specific documentation that must be provided, and the specific milestones that must be achieved within defined timeframes. Verification mechanisms must be independent of the supplier and must have the technical expertise to assess whether genuine technology transfer is occurring or whether nominal compliance is masking the retention of proprietary knowledge by the foreign partner.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEFENSE PROCUREMENT IN BANGLADESH

7.1 Corruption in Defense Procurement: Manifestations, Mechanisms, and Costs

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Defense procurement corruption in Bangladesh is not an allegation made on the basis of suspicion alone but a conclusion supported by a substantial body of documented evidence, analytical inference from procurement outcomes that defy value-for-money explanation, and the testimony of informed insiders who have described the systematic nature of the practices involved.

The specific mechanisms through which corruption operates in Bangladesh's defense procurement are consistent with the general global pattern of defense procurement corruption identified in the scholarly literature. The first mechanism is the specification manipulation that excludes competitive alternatives: procurement specifications are drafted to match the characteristics of a preferred supplier's product, rather than being drawn from an independent assessment of the capability required, ensuring that the "competitive" tender produces the pre-determined result. The second mechanism is the agent or intermediary fee, paid by foreign defense companies to connected Bangladeshi individuals who use their political or official access to facilitate favorable procurement decisions; these fees are typically calibrated as a percentage of contract value and are routinely built into the bid pricing. The third mechanism is the revolving door, through which military officers who participate in procurement decisions are rewarded with post-service positions in defense companies or their local representatives, creating the incentive alignment described in Section 1.3's principal-agent analysis.

The economic costs of procurement corruption are difficult to quantify precisely but can be estimated from the price premiums that corrupted contracts typically command. Comparative analysis of similar defense procurement contracts across countries with differing corruption levels suggests that corruption adds between 10 and 30 percent to contract costs in high-corruption environments. Applied to Bangladesh's annual defense procurement budget, even the lower estimate of 10 percent premium implies annual waste of several hundred million dollars, representing military capability that Bangladesh paid for and did not receive.

The strategic costs of procurement corruption are potentially greater than the economic costs. When procurement decisions are driven by corruption rather than military merit, the armed forces receive equipment that is not optimally suited to their operational requirements, that may be of lower quality than alternatives would have provided, and whose supply relationship creates dependencies that serve the financial interests of procurement decision-makers rather than the strategic interests of the state.

7.2 The Anti-Corruption Framework for Defense Procurement: Legal Instruments and Their Enforcement

Bangladesh's legal framework for combating defense procurement corruption includes general anti-corruption provisions in the Penal Code, the Money Laundering Prevention Act, and the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, together with the specific procurement governance provisions of the Public Procurement Act and Rules. The Anti-Corruption Commission has nominal jurisdiction over defense procurement corruption, but its effectiveness in investigating and prosecuting defense procurement cases has been severely limited by political pressures, access constraints created by the security classification of relevant documents, and the institutional

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

capture that results when the prosecution of senior defense officials or their civilian counterparts is blocked by political considerations.

The Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2012 provides a potentially powerful instrument for addressing defense procurement corruption because the financial flows associated with procurement corruption, the agent fees and kickbacks that flow from foreign defense companies through offshore financial centers to connected Bangladeshi individuals, are precisely the kind of transactions that money laundering laws are designed to address. The forensic financial investigation techniques that can trace these flows have been developed to a high level of sophistication by specialist units in other jurisdictions and could be developed in Bangladesh with appropriate training, resources, and institutional independence.

The international anti-corruption frameworks relevant to defense procurement include the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, which Bangladesh has not acceded to but whose provisions represent the international standard for regulating the foreign bribery activities of defense companies seeking Bangladeshi contracts. The practical significance of the OECD Convention is that it creates enforcement obligations in the home countries of major defense exporters: if a French, British, German, Turkish, or American defense company pays bribes to obtain a Bangladeshi contract, it is potentially liable under French, British, German, Turkish, or American law as well as under Bangladeshi law. Bangladesh's cooperation with foreign enforcement authorities investigating the Bangladesh-related activities of their domestic defense companies represents one of the most potentially effective tools for addressing defense procurement corruption, and should be actively pursued.

7.3 Parliamentary Oversight of Defense Procurement: The Democratic Accountability Deficit

Bangladesh's Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Defence represents the principal mechanism of democratic parliamentary oversight of defense procurement, but its effectiveness has been severely limited by a combination of institutional design limitations, information access constraints, and the political culture that surrounds defense oversight in Bangladesh's parliamentary system.

The structural limitations of the Defence Committee's oversight function include the absence of a professional secretariat with defense procurement expertise to support committee members' analysis; the classification of most substantive defense procurement documents in ways that prevent committee members from accessing the information they would need for genuine oversight; the tradition of bipartisan deference to the executive on defense matters that reduces the incentive for opposition committee members to pursue rigorous scrutiny; and the committee's inability to compel testimony from senior military officers who are accountable to the executive rather than to Parliament.

The international comparative models that have developed effective parliamentary oversight of defense procurement share several features that could be adapted for Bangladesh. The UK's Public Accounts Committee, supported by the National Audit Office, has developed the institutional expertise and the access rights that enable genuine financial oversight of defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

procurement programs. The US Congress's Armed Services Committees and Appropriations Committees, while operating within a very different constitutional framework, demonstrate that legislative oversight of defense procurement can be genuinely rigorous without compromising operational security when appropriate security clearance arrangements are made for committee members and staff.

The reform of Bangladesh's parliamentary defense oversight function should include the establishment of a dedicated Parliamentary Budget Office with defense procurement expertise; the development of a cleared parliamentary oversight channel through which appropriately vetted committee members can access classified procurement information subject to information handling controls; the strengthening of the Comptroller and Auditor General's defense audit function with specialized defense procurement audit capabilities; and the development of a culture of bipartisan scrutiny that treats the oversight function as a constitutional obligation rather than a political tool.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL THEORY AND BANGLADESH'S DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

8.1 The Developmental State and Defense Industry: Lessons from Asia

The developmental state model of economic governance, theorized by Chalmers Johnson in his analysis of MITI and the Japanese Miracle (1982) and subsequently applied to South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia, provides the most relevant theoretical framework for thinking about how Bangladesh could use defense industrial policy as an instrument of broader economic and technological development.

The developmental state thesis holds that states with limited industrial bases can accelerate industrialization through targeted interventions that combine directed credit to specific industries, protection from foreign competition during the learning phase of industrial development, requirements for technology transfer and local content, export promotion for industries that have reached competitive maturity, and the close coordination of government industrial policy with private sector investment decisions. Applied to defense industry, this framework generates a specific program: identify the defense industrial sectors where Bangladesh has the most potential to develop competitive capability, provide the financial and regulatory support necessary to develop those capabilities to the point where they can meet domestic needs, require technology transfer from foreign procurement partners that accelerates the learning process, and progressively develop export capability in the systems where Bangladesh achieves genuine competitive advantage.

The South Korean experience with defense industry development is the most relevant and encouraging precedent for Bangladesh. Korea in the 1970s had a defense industrial base comparable in its limitations to Bangladesh's current position: a few state-owned factories producing basic ammunition and small arms, total dependence on American arms transfers for all

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

major platforms, and no domestic capability for the design or production of complex weapons systems. The Korean government's decision to pursue defense industrialization as a strategic priority, through the creation of the Defense Development Agency, the Defense Procurement Agency, and the channeling of offset requirements from American procurement toward Korean industrial development, produced within three decades a defense industrial base capable of designing and producing main battle tanks, self-propelled artillery, warships, submarines, training aircraft, and a range of electronic and weapons systems that Korea now exports globally.

The timeline of South Korean defense industrial development, approximately three decades from almost nothing to global competitiveness in multiple defense sectors, is realistic benchmarking for Bangladesh's aspirations. A thirty-year development program that focuses on the sectors where Bangladesh has the most promising industrial foundations and the clearest technology transfer pathway could, if sustained with consistent political will and adequate resources, produce by 2055 a defense industrial base capable of meeting a substantial fraction of Bangladesh's domestic defense equipment needs indigenously.

8.2 The BNP Industrial Policy Proposals: Assessment and Analysis

The BNP government's defense industrial proposals, outlined in pre-election manifesto documents and post-election policy statements, represent the most explicit articulation of a political party's vision for Bangladesh's defense industrial development in the country's history. The proposals include the development of a national defense production policy; the establishment of a Defense Industrial Corporation to coordinate and manage public defense enterprises; the development of a private sector defense industry through regulatory frameworks, tax incentives, and procurement preferences; investment in defense research and development through a dedicated Defense Research and Development Organization; and the progressive development of export capability in systems where Bangladesh achieves production competence.

These proposals are analytically sound in their direction if not always in their specific details, and they merit the serious engagement that this Part provides. The Defense Industrial Corporation concept, which would consolidate BOF, BMTF, BDPL, and potentially Khulna Shipyard and the naval dockyards under a single professional management structure with commercial orientation and clear strategic mandate, represents a significant departure from the current fragmented institutional landscape where each defense enterprise operates under its own bureaucratic culture and ministerial oversight chain.

The private sector engagement proposals are particularly significant because they recognize, implicitly, that the scale of investment required for defense industrial development exceeds what the state budget can provide and that the management and innovation capabilities of the private sector are necessary complements to the state's strategic direction. The development of a regulatory framework that allows private Bangladeshi companies to participate in defense production, initially as subcontractors to the state enterprises and progressively as prime contractors for specific categories of equipment, is consistent with global best practice and with the industrial development logic of the developmental state model.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Defense Research and Development Organization proposal addresses one of the most fundamental weaknesses in Bangladesh's current defense industrial base: the absence of a professional defense research community that can generate indigenous designs, adapt foreign technologies to Bangladesh's specific operational requirements, and develop the next generation of defense scientists and engineers. The DRDO equivalent for Bangladesh would not need to produce fifth-generation fighter aircraft immediately; it would need to produce the incremental innovations in existing equipment, the adaptations of commercial technology for military use, and the conceptual designs for future indigenous systems that constitute the working capital of a developing defense industrial sector.

8.3 The Role of Defense Economics in Development Strategy

The relationship between defense spending and economic development is one of the most contested questions in development economics, with the theoretical and empirical literature producing conclusions that range from strong positive effects, through neutral effects, to significant negative effects depending on the specific mechanisms through which defense spending influences growth.

The negative case against defense spending, associated with economists in the Mancur Olson tradition, focuses on the opportunity costs of defense investment: every taka spent on a fighter aircraft is a taka not spent on schools, hospitals, or infrastructure. In a resource-constrained developing economy like Bangladesh, where education, health, and infrastructure gaps are enormous and where returns to social investment are high, the opportunity cost argument for limiting defense spending is genuinely powerful.

The positive case for defense industrial investment, associated with the developmental state literature and with the experience of states like South Korea and Israel, holds that defense industrial spending can generate technological spillovers, human capital development, and manufacturing capability upgrades that have positive effects on broader economic development. The validity of this argument depends critically on the character of the defense investment: procurement from foreign suppliers generates minimal domestic economic benefits beyond the employment of local agents and intermediaries, while domestic defense production can generate the spillovers the positive case requires.

For Bangladesh, the appropriate development economics framework for assessing defense industrial investment is neither the pure opportunity cost framework nor the pure spillover framework but a hybrid that asks, for each proposed defense industrial investment, whether the specifically defense character of the investment is necessary to achieve the desired industrial development outcome, or whether similar industrial development could be achieved through direct civilian industrial investment at lower cost and with more predictable results.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER NINE: EXPORT STRATEGY AND BANGLADESH'S GLOBAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POSITIONING

9.1 Defense Export Opportunities: Where Bangladesh Has Competitive Potential

Bangladesh's defense export potential, while genuinely limited by the current state of its defense industrial base, is not zero, and the development of a selective defense export strategy serves multiple strategic objectives simultaneously: it provides the scale of production that reduces unit costs for domestic procurement; it generates foreign exchange; it builds international defense relationships that diversify Bangladesh's own supply chain; and it positions Bangladesh in the global defense market as a producer rather than purely a customer, which changes the terms on which suppliers engage with Dhaka.

The product categories where Bangladesh has the most realistic near-term export potential are those that leverage the combination of its competitive manufacturing cost base and its emerging production capabilities. These include ammunition and explosives from BOF's expanding production lines, particularly the small arms ammunition, mortar rounds, and artillery shells where production quality has been validated and the price advantage over Western producers is significant; patrol and coastal vessels from Khulna Shipyard and other commercial yards that can be adapted for military patrol roles; and military clothing and personal equipment where Bangladesh's established garment industry provides a cost-competitive manufacturing base.

Bangladesh's participation in the World Defence Show 2026 in Riyadh, representing the first major international defense exhibition at which Bangladesh presented its indigenous defense industrial capabilities to a global audience, represents an important step in developing Bangladesh's profile as a defense industrial player rather than purely a defense import market. Participation in the World Defence Show 2026 provided Bangladesh with an opportunity to present its defence manufacturing capabilities to a global audience, serving as a platform for potential collaboration, technology exchange, and export prospects. Bdmilitary

The medium-term export potential, achievable within a 10 to 15 year timeframe with appropriate investment and technology development, includes UAVs from the co-production program with Baykar or alternative partners; military vehicles and armored platforms from BMTF's expanded production; naval patrol vessels of progressively increasing capability; and potentially modular weapon system components that can be supplied as subcontracted inputs to larger defense system integrators in partner countries.

9.2 Regional Defense Cooperation and Industrial Integration

The BIMSTEC framework, which brings together Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan, provides a formal multilateral framework within which regional defense industrial cooperation could in principle develop. The security dimensions of BIMSTEC cooperation, including counterterrorism, maritime security, and disaster response, are already

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

reasonably developed, and the extension of this cooperation to include defense industrial collaboration is at least conceptually possible.

The practical obstacles to BIMSTEC defense industrial cooperation are substantial, however, and derive primarily from the bilateral political complications between member states. Bangladesh-India relations in 2026 are at a low point, reflecting the fall-out from the July Revolution and the perception in Delhi that the current Bangladeshi government is hostile to Indian interests. Bangladesh-Myanmar relations are complicated by the Rohingya crisis, the Myanmar civil war, and the security incidents along the border described in Part Nine. These bilateral complications do not prevent BIMSTEC from functioning in less politically sensitive areas but they do create significant obstacles to defense industrial cooperation that would require the kind of strategic trust that currently does not exist.

The Turkey-Bangladesh defense industrial partnership that is developing through the SiPER, Hisar-O+, and UAV co-production discussions may provide the model for bilateral defense industrial cooperation that is more practically achievable than the multilateral BIMSTEC framework. Turkey's commitment to genuine technology transfer and co-production, its status as a state that has successfully developed a competitive indigenous defense industrial base from a relatively limited starting point, and its political relationship with Bangladesh that is warming rapidly, make it the most promising bilateral defense industrial partner for the current period.

CHAPTER TEN: DRAFTING A BANGLADESH DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL POLICY

10.1 The Case for a Formal Defense Industrial Policy Document

Bangladesh does not currently have a published, comprehensive defense industrial policy that articulates the government's strategic vision for the development of the indigenous defense industrial base, the principles that govern defense procurement decisions, the framework for private sector engagement in defense production, the management of technology transfer agreements, the oversight of defense procurement integrity, and the targets against which progress in defense industrial development will be measured.

This gap is itself a policy failure, because the absence of a formal policy framework means that defense industrial decisions are made on an ad hoc basis, without the coordination across government departments that effective industrial development requires, without the consistency of approach that industrial investors need to make long-term commitments, without the accountability framework that democratic oversight demands, and without the strategic coherence that the developmental state model requires.

The draft Defense Industrial Policy proposed in this section is intended as a framework document that articulates the core principles and strategic objectives that such a policy should

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

embody, leaving specific program details to the subsidiary planning documents that would be developed within the policy framework.

10.2 Draft Framework: Bangladesh Defense Industrial Policy 2026-2040

Preamble and Strategic Rationale

Bangladesh's defense industrial policy must be grounded in an honest assessment of the country's current industrial capabilities, its long-term strategic interests, and the resource constraints that shape what is achievable within any given planning horizon. This policy does not pretend that Bangladesh can become a self-sufficient defense industrial power within the fifteen-year planning horizon it covers. It does assert that Bangladesh can, within that horizon, make significant progress toward reducing its strategic supply dependencies, developing competitive industrial capabilities in specific technology domains, generating positive spillovers from defense industrial investment into the broader economy, and positioning Bangladesh as a recognized player in the regional and global defense industrial market.

Core Principle One: Strategic Autonomy as the Governing Objective

All defense industrial policy decisions shall be evaluated against the criterion of whether they advance or retard Bangladesh's strategic autonomy: its capacity to make independent decisions about its own defense without being compelled by the leverage that supply chain dependencies create. Strategic autonomy does not require zero dependency; it requires that dependencies be managed, diversified, and progressively reduced in the capability domains where dependency creates the greatest strategic vulnerability.

Core Principle Two: Domestic Value Addition as the Investment Priority

Defense procurement decisions shall be evaluated not only on the military capability they provide but on the domestic value addition they generate. Procurement from foreign suppliers without offset requirements or technology transfer provisions provides military capability at the cost of strategic dependency and with no industrial development benefit. Procurement that includes meaningful co-production, technology transfer, and local content requirements provides military capability while simultaneously building the industrial capabilities that reduce future dependency.

Core Principle Three: Fiscal Sustainability and Lifecycle Cost Realism

Defense industrial investment decisions must be grounded in honest lifecycle cost analysis that accounts not merely for acquisition cost but for the full cost of operation, maintenance, upgrade, and eventual replacement over the service life of the system. Programs that appear affordable at acquisition but are unaffordable to sustain represent a systematic waste of procurement investment and must be identified and avoided through rigorous cost analysis at the program definition stage.

Core Principle Four: Democratic Accountability and Procurement Integrity

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

All defense procurement decisions above a specified threshold value shall be subject to review by an independent Defense Procurement Oversight Board with the authority to examine the full procurement record, assess value for money, investigate allegations of corruption or conflict of interest, and publish its findings in a public report. The threshold for mandatory review shall be set at Tk 500 crore (approximately 45 million dollars) for single contracts and Tk 1,000 crore for the annual aggregate procurement with any single supplier.

Core Principle Five: Technology Sovereignty as the Long-Term Goal

Bangladesh's defense industrial policy shall be guided by the long-term objective of technology sovereignty: the capacity to design, develop, produce, and sustain defense equipment using Bangladesh's own intellectual resources, without fundamental dependence on foreign design rights or production know-how. This objective will not be achieved within the fifteen-year planning horizon of this policy, but every major technology transfer agreement, every co-production arrangement, and every research and development investment shall be assessed against its contribution to this long-term objective.

Priority Sector One: Ammunition and Explosives

BOF shall be supported to achieve self-sufficiency in the full range of ammunition and explosives types used by Bangladesh's armed forces, including small arms ammunition in all service calibers, mortar rounds, artillery shells in 105mm, 122mm, 130mm, and 155mm calibers, anti-tank rocket propelled grenades and their warhead types, guided missile warheads for systems currently procured from foreign suppliers, and naval mine and torpedo warheads.

Priority Sector Two: Unmanned Aerial Systems

Bangladesh shall establish a dedicated UAV industrial development program, building on the co-production arrangement with Turkey and drawing on the commercial drone sector's existing capabilities. The program shall aim to achieve indigenous production of tactical surveillance UAVs within five years, tactical strike UAVs within ten years, and medium-altitude long-endurance UAVs within fifteen years.

Priority Sector Three: Naval Vessels

Khulna Shipyard shall be developed as the center of Bangladesh's naval industrial capability, with a progressive program of capability development from current patrol vessel construction through offshore patrol vessel construction to eventual frigate construction capability. Each procurement of new naval vessels shall include a requirement for a specified percentage of construction work to be conducted at Khulna Shipyard.

Priority Sector Four: Electronic Systems and Cyber Defense

Bangladesh shall establish a Defense Electronics Research and Development Center, staffed by graduates of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and allied institutions

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

with specialized defense systems training, to develop indigenous capability in radar systems, electronic warfare, communications security, and cyber defense systems.

Priority Sector Five: Ground Forces Equipment

BOF and BMTF shall be supported to develop indigenous production capability for RPG systems, light mortars, anti-tank guided weapons at the lighter end of the capability spectrum, military wheeled vehicles, and progressively more sophisticated armored vehicle systems.

Governance: Defense Industrial Corporation and Oversight Architecture

A Defense Industrial Corporation (DIC) shall be established as a state-owned enterprise with professional management, a commercial orientation, and a strategic mandate defined by this policy document. The DIC shall have authority over BOF, BMTF, BDPL, and relevant elements of Khulna Shipyard, and shall be responsible for developing and implementing the specific industrial development programs within the DIC's mandate.

A Defense Procurement Oversight Board (DPOB) shall be established as an independent statutory body with the authority to review major procurement decisions, investigate allegations of corruption, and publish annual reports on defense procurement outcomes. The DPOB shall include representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Law, the Comptroller and Auditor General's office, and independent experts with defense procurement expertise.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: SYNTHESIS, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE LONG VIEW

11.1 The Philosophical Dimension: Defense Industry as an Expression of National Values

The decision to develop a domestic defense industrial base is not merely an industrial policy choice or a military capability decision. It is, at a deeper level, an expression of what a nation values about its own sovereignty, what it believes about its place in the international order, and what it is willing to invest in the material foundations of its own independence.

The philosophical tradition that most directly addresses this dimension is the tradition of republican thought, from Machiavelli through Harrington to the American founders, that associated national independence with the capacity for self-defense and self-defense with the capacity for domestic arms production. Machiavelli's insistence, analyzed in Part One of this textbook, that a state that relies entirely on foreign troops or foreign weapons is structurally vulnerable, resonates across five centuries directly into Bangladesh's contemporary strategic situation. A Bangladesh that cannot produce any of its own weapons is a Bangladesh that must, in the final analysis, accept the terms of those who produce its weapons for it.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This is not a counsel for arms industry development at any cost or on any priority. It is a counsel for recognizing the specific constitutional and existential dimension of the defense industrial question: the capacity to arm oneself independently is a condition of the sovereignty that the Constitution affirms and that Bangladesh's independence struggle was fought to achieve.

11.2 The Jurisprudential Dimension: Public Procurement Law, Corruption, and Constitutional Obligation

The jurisprudential dimension of defense procurement policy involves the constitutional obligations that follow from the public character of defense procurement: the obligation to spend public money in ways that serve the public interest, the obligation to maintain the integrity of public officers against corruption, and the obligation to provide the democratic accountability for public expenditure that the constitutional system requires.

The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has, in a series of administrative law decisions on public procurement more broadly, established the principle that public procurement decisions are not purely executive discretionary acts immune from judicial scrutiny but administrative acts subject to judicial review for compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and the broader constitutional obligation to act in the public interest. These decisions have not yet been applied systematically to defense procurement, which has largely been shielded from judicial scrutiny by security classifications and executive assertions of privilege.

The jurisprudential case for extending judicial oversight to defense procurement decisions, within appropriate security constraints, is built on the same constitutional foundations as the case for judicial oversight of executive action generally: the constitutional principle that no person, and no institution, is above the law. The challenge is designing the specific judicial oversight mechanism that preserves genuine security through appropriate access controls while ensuring that the rule of law principle applies to defense procurement as genuinely as it applies to any other area of public spending.

11.3 The Vision for 2040: Bangladesh as a Meaningful Defense Industrial Player

The vision that this Part advances for Bangladesh's defense industrial development through 2040 is deliberately ambitious but also deliberately realistic. It is not the vision of a self-sufficient defense industrial power: that ambition is beyond Bangladesh's realistic capacity within the planning horizon. It is the vision of a state that has progressively reduced its most dangerous strategic dependencies, developed competitive indigenous capabilities in several specific technology domains, established itself as a recognized defense industrial partner in the regional market, and laid the intellectual and industrial foundations for the more advanced capabilities that subsequent generations may develop.

By 2040, on the basis of the policy framework and investment program proposed in this Part, Bangladesh should be able to produce domestically essentially all of its ammunition and explosives requirements; a family of tactical UAV systems for surveillance and potentially for strike missions; all major small arms, crew-served weapons, and light anti-armor systems; patrol vessels, offshore patrol vessels, and initial capability toward frigate construction; military

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

wheeled and tracked vehicles at the lighter end of the capability spectrum; and a range of electronic systems including radar components, communications equipment, and cyber defense tools.

These domestic production capabilities would reduce Bangladesh's supply chain vulnerability significantly, generate positive economic spillovers into related civilian industries, provide the foundation for a selective defense export program that earns foreign exchange and builds international industrial relationships, and demonstrate to Bangladesh's people and to the world that this nation of 170 million, which has already shown the world what it can achieve in garments, pharmaceuticals, and information technology, can also build the material foundations of its own sovereignty.

The aspiration of Part Ten is consistent with the overarching intellectual and strategic aspiration that runs through this entire textbook: the aspiration to build a Bangladesh defense policy that is not merely reactive to threats but is actively constitutive of the sovereignty, the democracy, and the dignity that the liberation of 1971 claimed for the people of Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION TO PART TEN: PRODUCTION AS SOVEREIGNTY

The analysis developed across eleven chapters of Part Ten arrives at a conclusion that is simultaneously strategic, economic, philosophical, and constitutional: defense industrial development for Bangladesh is not an optional supplement to procurement policy but a constitutive element of the sovereignty that Bangladesh's Constitution asserts and that its people's liberation struggle established.

A Bangladesh that must go to China for every submarine spare part, to Russia for every MiG-29 maintenance cycle, to Turkey for every new air defense battery, and to Pakistan for every new combat aircraft is a Bangladesh whose defense capability is permanently conditional on the continuing goodwill of those suppliers. Goodwill is not sovereignty. Supply chain control is a form of sovereignty.

The path from where Bangladesh is to where it needs to be is long, expensive, and intellectually demanding. It requires the sustained political will that Bangladesh's governments have historically been reluctant to commit to defense industrial development. It requires the institutional reforms, the procurement transparency, the anti-corruption measures, and the parliamentary oversight that Parts One through Ten of this textbook have collectively called for. It requires the research investment, the engineering education, and the patient skill development that industrial capability accumulation demands. And it requires the strategic clarity about where Bangladesh's genuine industrial comparative advantages lie and where they do not.

None of this is impossible. South Korea showed that it is possible. Turkey showed that it is possible. Israel showed that it is possible. Each of these states began from a position of near-total

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

arms import dependence and built, over thirty years or more, a defense industrial base that reduced their strategic vulnerabilities, contributed to their economic development, and expressed in material form the sovereignty they had declared in political form.

Part Eleven will address the emerging technology dimensions of Bangladesh's defense future: artificial intelligence, quantum computing, advanced unmanned systems, cyber warfare at the strategic level, directed energy weapons, and the conceptual and institutional challenges that these technologies create for Bangladesh's defense planning, force design, and the legislative and ethical framework within which emerging weapons must be governed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TEN

Defense Industrial Policy: Theory and Comparative Studies

Johnson, Chalmers. MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy 1925-1975. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982.

Amsden, Alice. Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Bitzinger, Richard. Towards a Brave New Arms Industry? Adelphi Paper 356. London: IISS, 2003.

Brauer, Jurgen and J.P. Dunne, eds. Arms Trade and Economic Development: Theory, Policy and Cases in Arms Trade Offsets. London: Routledge, 2004.

Hartley, Keith. The Economics of Defense Policy. London: Brassey's, 1991.

Markusen, Ann. The Defense Economy: How the Military Shapes Our Culture and Society. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Ross, Andrew. "The Dynamics of Indigenous Defense Industry Development." International Organization, Volume 41, Number 4, 1987.

Neuman, Stephanie. Defense Industries of the Third World: Problems and Promises. Lexington Books, 1984.

Harkavy, Robert. Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases. New York: Pergamon, 1982.

Winner, Langdon. "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Daedalus, Volume 109, Number 1, 1980.

Bangladesh Defense Industrial Base

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh Ordnance Factories. Official Website. bof.gov.bd.

Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory. Official Website. bmtf.gov.bd.

"Bangladesh Army Showcases Indigenous Defence Products at World Defence Show 2026." bdmilitary.com, February 12, 2026.

"Bangladesh Ordnance Factories Expansion Plan 2025 to 2035." bdmilitary.com, April 24, 2025.

"Bangladesh Ordnance Factories to Produce 40mm RPG Systems Indigenously." bdmilitary.com, November 7, 2025.

"Prospect of Indigenous Defence Industry in Bangladesh." NDC Journal, Volume 3, 2013.

"Building Defence Industry in Bangladesh." New Age, 2023.

Bangladesh Ordnance Factories. Wikipedia.

Fighter Aircraft Procurement

"Bangladesh Considers JF-17 Fighter Jet Acquisition Following Talks with Pakistan Air Force." Army Recognition, January 7, 2026.

"Bangladesh Could Purchase up to 32 Pakistani JF-17 Thunder Fighter Jets." Army Recognition, January 21, 2025.

"Bangladesh Air Force Procurement: Strengthening the Future Force Structure." bdmilitary.com, October 23, 2025.

"Bangladesh Set to Acquire JF-17 Block III?" Defence Security Asia, November 22, 2025.

"Bangladesh Makes Urgent Acquisition of JF-17 Block III Fighters." bdmilitary.com, October 15, 2025.

"Bangladesh Moves to Acquire 48 JF-17 Block III Fighters from Pakistan." Defence Security Asia, January 9, 2026.

"Bangladesh Air Force Embarks on an Unprecedented Modernisation Drive." bdmilitary.com, October 15, 2025.

"Bangladesh Weighs JF-17 Fighter Jet Deal with Pakistan." Aerospace Global News, January 7, 2026.

"Why JF-17 Block III and J-10C Fighter Jets are the Wrong Choice for Bangladesh." Global Defense Corp, January 11, 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Turkey-Bangladesh Defense Partnership

"Turkey-Bangladesh Air Defense Deal Jolts South Asia's Skies." Asia Times, October 21, 2025.

Obaidullah, Md. "Turkey-Bangladesh Air Defense Deal Jolts South Asia's Skies." SSRN, October 17, 2025.

"Turkey Reportedly Nears Deal to Supply Hisar-O+ and Siper Air Defence System to Bangladesh." Defence Security Asia, October 11, 2025.

"Bangladesh Air Force Modernization Clouded by Uncertainty." TURDEF, October 16, 2025.

"Turkey's Role in Bangladesh's Defense Development and India's Concerns." Politics Today, December 30, 2025.

"Turkey's Bangladesh Arms Deal Poses 'Unwelcome' Challenge to India." The Week, October 21, 2025.

Defense Procurement Governance and Corruption

SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2026.

Transparency International Defense and Security Programme. Government Defence Integrity Index: Bangladesh. London: TI-DSP, 2024.

Schooner, Steven. "Competitive Sourcing Policy: More Sail than Rudder?" Public Contract Law Journal, Volume 33, 2003.

OECD. Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, 1997.

World Bank. Country Procurement Assessment Report: Bangladesh. Washington: World Bank, 2023.

Global Defense Industry Context

SIPRI Yearbook 2025. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2025.

SIPRI Yearbook 2026. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2026.

Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Foreign Military Sales Reports. Washington: DSCA, 2025.

Congressional Research Service. Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations. Washington: CRS, 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Wezeman, Pieter and Alexandra Kuimova. "Military Spending and Arms Imports by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE." SIPRI Fact Sheet, 2025.

"Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh Military Modernization Under the New Government." The Diplomat, December 2024.

"Bangladesh Modernizes All Branches of Its Military to Counter Threats from India and Myanmar." Army Recognition, 2024.

End of Part Ten

Part Eleven will address the emerging technology dimensions of Bangladesh's defense future: artificial intelligence in military decision-making, autonomous weapons systems and the ethical and legal framework for their governance, quantum computing and its implications for cryptography and intelligence, advanced cyber warfare capabilities at the strategic level, directed energy weapons, space-based assets and their military applications, and the conceptual and institutional challenges that these rapidly evolving technologies create for Bangladesh's defense planning, force design, procurement, and the legislative framework within which emerging weapons must be governed under both domestic constitutional law and international humanitarian law.

PART ELEVEN: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES, AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, CYBER WARFARE, QUANTUM COMPUTING, DIRECTED ENERGY, AND SPACE: THE TECHNOLOGICAL FRONTIER OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE FUTURE

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART ELEVEN

The ten parts that preceded this one built an intellectual architecture of formidable breadth and depth. They traversed the philosophical origins of defense thought, the constitutional and legislative scaffolding of Bangladesh's security governance, the geopolitical pressures that squeeze Dhaka's strategic choices, the jurisprudential dimensions of emergency powers and civil liberties, the civil-military dynamics that have shaped and repeatedly disrupted Bangladesh's democratic aspirations, the maritime security imperatives of the Bay of Bengal, the counterterrorism legislative framework and its discontents, the intelligence architecture and its accountability deficit, the diplomatic instruments of strategic balancing, and, most recently, the defense industrial base as a material expression of sovereignty.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Eleven arrives at a threshold that previous generations of strategic planners could not fully anticipate: the moment when technology is not merely a force multiplier but a force transformer, when the character of warfare itself is being rewritten at a speed that outpaces the legislative, diplomatic, and philosophical frameworks humanity has built to govern organized violence. Artificial intelligence systems are making targeting recommendations faster than human cognition can evaluate them. Autonomous weapons are completing kill chains without human fingers on any trigger. Quantum computers are threatening to shatter every encryption protocol that currently protects military communications, financial systems, and state secrets. Directed energy weapons are reshaping the economics of air defense in ways that make the missile-versus-missile calculus of the twentieth century obsolete. And the space domain, once the exclusive province of superpowers with billion-dollar launch programs, is being democratized by commercial small-satellite technology in ways that simultaneously create new intelligence capabilities and new strategic vulnerabilities.

Bangladesh must navigate all of these technological revolutions simultaneously, with a defense budget that in absolute terms is a fraction of what its larger neighbors spend, with institutional and human capital that is still catching up with the demands of twenty-first-century military operations, and with a constitutional framework that was never designed to address the specific challenges that autonomous weapons, algorithmic warfare, and quantum cryptography create for democratic governance.

This Part addresses each of these technological domains in depth, examining not merely the technology itself but the strategic logic that drives its development and deployment, the legal and ethical controversies it generates, the specific implications it holds for Bangladesh's defense posture and policy, and the legislative and institutional reforms that a serious engagement with these technologies demands. The analysis is grounded in the philosophical and jurisprudential traditions developed in earlier parts of this textbook, because the most fundamental questions raised by artificial intelligence in warfare, namely who is responsible for the decision to kill, whether a machine can comply with the laws of armed conflict, and what the limits of autonomous state violence are in a democratic constitutional order, are ultimately philosophical and legal questions wearing technological clothing.

The reader will find this Part both technically demanding and philosophically provocative. That combination is deliberate. The gravest mistakes in the governance of emerging military technologies have historically been made by policymakers who understood the technology but not the ethics, or who understood the ethics but not the technology. Both failures are fatal in different ways. This Part attempts to hold both in productive tension.

CHAPTER ONE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MILITARY DECISION-MAKING: THEORY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE BANGLADESH IMPERATIVE

1.1 The Intelligence Revolution in Military Affairs: Setting the Stage

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The integration of artificial intelligence into military operations is widely described as a Revolution in Military Affairs, a concept that entered strategic discourse in the 1990s to describe periodic historical moments when technological change so fundamentally alters the character of warfare that states that fail to adapt are strategically marginalized. Previous Revolutions in Military Affairs include the development of gunpowder artillery in the fifteenth century, the industrial mass mobilization warfare of the nineteenth century, the mechanized and airpower revolution of the early twentieth century, and the nuclear revolution of the mid-twentieth century. Each of these transformations created new winners and new losers in the international system, rewarding states that successfully adapted and punishing those that did not.

The artificial intelligence revolution in military affairs is, by most assessments, the most profound since the nuclear revolution, and possibly more transformative because its applications span every domain of military activity simultaneously. Nuclear weapons were operationally useful only in the most extreme scenarios and carried costs that effectively limited their use to deterrence rather than actual employment. Artificial intelligence, by contrast, is immediately and continuously applicable across intelligence collection and analysis, logistics optimization, maintenance scheduling, threat detection, cyber operations, electronic warfare, decision support, autonomous vehicles, and eventually lethal targeting. It enhances every other military capability rather than substituting for it.

The philosophical challenge that artificial intelligence poses to existing frameworks of military law and ethics is captured in the concept of meaningful human control, a phrase that has become the organizing principle of international discussions about autonomous weapons systems. The concept is deceptively simple: lethal decisions should be made by human beings exercising genuine moral judgment, not delegated to algorithms whose operation is too fast, too opaque, or too distributed for human understanding and accountability. But when one interrogates what meaningful human control actually requires in practice, the simplicity dissolves. Does a human being who approves an AI-generated target list exercise meaningful control? Does a drone operator who monitors but does not direct an autonomous engagement system exercise meaningful control? Does a commander who sets the rules of engagement parameters within which an autonomous system operates exercise meaningful control? These questions do not have obvious answers, and the international community has spent a decade in inconclusive discussion about how to define the boundary between legitimate human-supervised automation and unacceptable fully autonomous lethal decision-making.

Bangladesh must develop its own position on these questions, not merely for the purposes of international diplomacy, though that purpose is important, but because these questions will eventually confront Bangladesh's own military planners, defense procurement officials, constitutional lawyers, and parliamentarians as the technologies become more accessible and more affordable.

1.2 The Conceptual Taxonomy of Military Artificial Intelligence

Before examining the policy implications of military artificial intelligence for Bangladesh, it is necessary to establish a clear conceptual taxonomy of the relevant systems, because the category

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

"artificial intelligence in defense" encompasses a vastly heterogeneous range of technologies with very different ethical, legal, and strategic implications.

The most fundamental conceptual distinction is between narrow artificial intelligence and general artificial intelligence. Narrow artificial intelligence refers to systems designed to perform specific, well-defined tasks, such as image recognition, pattern detection in communications intercepts, natural language translation, terrain analysis, or predictive maintenance scheduling, within a domain for which they have been specifically trained. These systems can dramatically outperform human beings on their specific tasks while being unable to generalize to even slightly different domains. The vast majority of military artificial intelligence currently deployed or under development falls in this category.

General artificial intelligence, by contrast, would refer to a system capable of performing any intellectual task that a human being can perform, with equivalent or superior flexibility and generalizability. No such system currently exists, and there is significant disagreement among researchers about how far away it is and whether it is achievable at all. The military implications of general artificial intelligence, if it were developed, would be so profound and so difficult to analyze that most strategic analysts bracket it and focus on the narrower but immediately relevant domain of narrow artificial intelligence.

Within narrow military artificial intelligence, a further taxonomy distinguishes decision support systems from decision-making systems. Decision support systems provide analysis, recommendations, and information to human decision-makers who retain full authority and responsibility for actual decisions. An artificial intelligence system that analyzes satellite imagery and identifies probable military vehicle concentrations is a decision support system: it enhances human intelligence assessment but does not make decisions. A system that automatically engages a target meeting defined parameters without human approval is a decision-making system, or at minimum a system that reduces human control to a procedural rather than substantive role.

The legal and ethical significance of this distinction is immense. Decision support systems do not raise fundamental questions about the accountability for lethal force, because a human being retains both the authority and the responsibility to act on or ignore the system's recommendations. Decision-making systems, especially in their fully autonomous form, raise the most profound questions about accountability under international humanitarian law, because there is no human being who made the specific decision to employ lethal force against a specific target at a specific moment. As the International Committee of the Red Cross has argued in its extensive work on autonomous weapons, the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution that underlie international humanitarian law all presuppose a decision-maker with the cognitive and moral capacity to apply them, and it is not obvious that any current or foreseeable artificial intelligence system possesses that capacity.

A third category that has emerged as particularly important in recent analysis is what researchers call human-machine teaming or human-on-the-loop systems, distinguished from both human-in-the-loop systems, where a human approves each individual action, and human-out-of-the-loop systems, where the machine operates entirely autonomously. In human-on-the-loop systems, the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

machine operates autonomously but a human operator monitors the system and retains the theoretical capacity to intervene and override. The practical question is whether the pace of autonomous operations leaves any realistic opportunity for meaningful human intervention. In anti-drone swarm defense applications, for example, the engagement timelines may be measured in milliseconds, making human-on-the-loop oversight effectively meaningless in practice even if it is formally preserved in the system's design.

1.3 Artificial Intelligence and the Epistemological Transformation of Military Intelligence

Perhaps the most immediately consequential and least publicly discussed application of artificial intelligence in military operations is in intelligence analysis. The volume of intelligence data generated by modern sensors, satellites, signals interception systems, and open-source information has long since exceeded the human analytical capacity available to process it. The United States intelligence community estimated in the early 2010s that it was collecting more data each hour than all of humanity's accumulated written history up to that point, and was able to analyze only a small fraction of it. Artificial intelligence systems that can rapidly screen and prioritize this data, identify patterns invisible to human analysts, and translate foreign-language intercepts in real time have already transformed intelligence analysis in major military establishments.

For Bangladesh, whose intelligence architecture remains, as Part Nine of this textbook documented in considerable detail, chronically underfunded, institutionally fragmented, and technically limited relative to the scale of the threats it must monitor, the intelligence applications of artificial intelligence represent perhaps the single most immediately valuable capability enhancement available. An AI-powered analysis system applied to open-source intelligence about developments in Myanmar's Rakhine State, to signals intercepts along the Naf River corridor, to satellite imagery of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, or to social media monitoring of extremist networks could provide Bangladesh's intelligence establishment with an analytical capability far beyond anything achievable through additional human analyst recruitment within any realistic budget envelope.

The epistemological challenges of military artificial intelligence are, however, as real as its analytical potential. The philosophical problem of explainability, sometimes called the black box problem, refers to the fact that many of the most powerful artificial intelligence systems, particularly deep learning neural networks, cannot explain the reasoning behind their outputs in terms that human beings can understand and verify. A system that identifies a building as a military command center, or a vehicle as a weapons carrier, or a communications pattern as indicative of imminent attack, may be doing so on the basis of statistical correlations in training data that human analysts cannot interrogate or validate. When such systems are applied to intelligence analysis supporting lethal targeting decisions, the epistemological opacity creates profound accountability problems.

The problem is compounded by the well-documented tendency of machine learning systems to replicate and amplify the biases embedded in their training data. A targeting system trained predominantly on data from one conflict environment may perform unreliably in a different

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

environment. A face recognition system trained predominantly on images from one ethnic population may produce dangerously inaccurate results when applied to a different population. For Bangladesh, which might acquire intelligence AI systems from external suppliers with training data generated primarily in Middle Eastern or European conflict contexts, the reliability of such systems in South Asian and specifically Bangladeshi environments is not guaranteed and must be rigorously tested and validated before operational deployment.

The philosopher of technology Langdon Winner's question, "Do artifacts have politics?", posed in his 1980 essay, applies with particular force to military artificial intelligence. The design choices embedded in an AI system, the data on which it is trained, the performance metrics by which it is evaluated, and the institutional contexts into which it is deployed all embody specific political and ethical values that are not neutral. A targeting AI trained to maximize strike efficiency may systematically discount civilian casualty risks that a human decision-maker would take more seriously. A surveillance AI designed to maximize threat detection may systematically over-identify certain ethnic or political groups as threats. These are not merely technical imperfections to be corrected by better engineering; they are political and ethical choices embedded in the design of technical systems, and they require political and ethical scrutiny, not just technical validation.

1.4 The Bangladesh National AI Strategy and Its Defense Dimensions

Bangladesh's Draft National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence, which has circulated in successive versions since the early 2020s under the auspices of the ICT Division, focuses primarily on civilian economic applications: digital services delivery, agricultural optimization, healthcare diagnostics, financial technology, and smart manufacturing. The defense dimensions of Bangladesh's AI strategy are, as of 2026, dramatically underdeveloped relative to the depth of the civilian technology vision.

This asymmetry reflects both the general institutional separation between the ICT policy apparatus, which drives the civilian AI strategy, and the defense establishment, which operates in its own institutional silo, and the fact that defense AI development globally has moved faster in military establishments with substantial dedicated research and development budgets than in states where defense innovation relies primarily on adaptation of civilian technology developments. For Bangladesh, with its relatively limited dedicated defense research and development investment, the path to military AI capability runs primarily through three channels: acquisition of foreign systems, adaptation of civilian commercial technology for military applications, and selective indigenous development in domains where Bangladesh has specific comparative advantages.

The most immediately relevant foreign acquisition option involves Chinese defense AI systems, given that China is Bangladesh's principal arms supplier and has developed some of the most sophisticated military AI systems in the world, including the BeiDou navigation system's military applications, AI-powered surveillance and reconnaissance systems integrated into platforms Bangladesh has already acquired, and signals intelligence and electronic warfare systems with AI-assisted analysis. The strategic dependency concern that runs through Part Ten of this textbook applies here with equal force: an AI system acquired from China whose

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

architecture Bangladesh cannot independently understand, verify, or audit creates a vulnerability that goes beyond the traditional supply chain problem, because software-dependent systems can potentially include undisclosed capabilities or vulnerabilities that the supplier can exploit or manipulate.

The acquisition of defense AI systems from Turkey, which has been developing a sophisticated indigenous defense AI ecosystem primarily through its defense industries establishment ASELSAN and the Presidency of Defense Industries, presents a somewhat different profile. Turkey's AI-powered loitering munitions and drone systems have been combat-proven in multiple conflicts including Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria, and most extensively Ukraine, where the Bayraktar TB2 demonstrated in 2022 what autonomous or semi-autonomous drones can achieve against conventionally organized military forces. The fact that Bangladesh has already entered a significant defense partnership with Turkey in the air defense domain creates a potential pathway for subsequent AI defense technology transfers that would be worth seriously exploring by Bangladesh's defense planners.

The adaptation of civilian commercial AI technology for military purposes deserves particular emphasis for Bangladesh because it is the channel most aligned with Bangladesh's existing technological strengths. Bangladesh has developed a modest but growing software and information technology export industry, has a community of trained software engineers, and has significant mobile telecommunications infrastructure that has driven data-intensive applications. These assets, while not easily translated into cutting-edge military AI development, do provide a foundation from which selected civilian AI applications can be adapted for military use in domains such as logistics optimization, maintenance scheduling, signals analysis, open-source intelligence collection, and communications security.

1.5 The Jurisprudential Foundations of AI Governance in Defense: Constitutional and International Law Frameworks

The deployment of artificial intelligence systems in contexts that may lead to the use of lethal force raises constitutional questions of fundamental importance for Bangladesh. Article 31 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the right to protection of law and establishes that the State shall not deprive any person of life or personal liberty save in accordance with law. Article 32 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty and prohibits deprivation thereof except in accordance with law. These constitutional provisions create a framework within which any use of lethal force by state agents, including lethal force directed by or through AI systems, must be capable of legal justification.

The jurisprudential question that AI targeting systems raise for Bangladesh's constitutional framework is whether a decision to employ lethal force that is made by or substantially determined by an AI system satisfies the "in accordance with law" requirement of Articles 31 and 32. The answer requires analysis at multiple levels. At the most basic level, the question is whether the law that authorizes the use of force specifies or adequately constrains the role of automated systems in targeting decisions. Bangladesh's existing legal framework governing the use of force by its armed forces, primarily the Army Act 1952, the Navy Ordinance 1961, the Air Force Act 1953, and the applicable provisions of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Procedure, was enacted decades before autonomous targeting systems existed and contains no provisions specifically addressing them.

This legislative gap is not unique to Bangladesh; it characterizes the legal framework of most states in the world. But it means that the constitutional adequacy of Bangladesh's legal authorization for AI-assisted or AI-directed lethal force has never been tested and cannot be assumed. The most compelling jurisprudential argument against AI-directed lethal force in Bangladesh's constitutional framework draws on the principle established in the Supreme Court's administrative law jurisprudence that delegations of discretionary public power must be made to legally accountable persons, not to anonymous processes, and that the exercise of such discretion must be capable of legal review. An AI targeting system that makes or substantially determines targeting decisions is neither a legally accountable person nor a system whose specific decisions are capable of review in the way that human decisions are. It therefore arguably falls outside the constitutional framework for the legitimate exercise of state power.

At the level of international law, the most developed analytical framework for AI in military operations comes from international humanitarian law, which applies to armed conflicts and imposes the fundamental principles of distinction between combatants and civilians, proportionality between anticipated military advantage and expected civilian harm, and precaution in the planning and execution of attacks. The International Committee of the Red Cross has argued consistently and extensively, most recently in its 2023 report on autonomous weapons and international humanitarian law, that these principles cannot be meaningfully applied by any current or foreseeable AI system acting without meaningful human control, because they require contextual judgment, moral reasoning, and the kind of qualitative assessment of individual circumstances that are precisely the capabilities that narrow AI systems do not possess.

For Bangladesh as a signatory to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the ICRC's position is not merely advisory: it reflects the authoritative interpretation of treaty obligations that bind Bangladesh in international law. A Bangladesh that deployed fully autonomous targeting systems in violation of these obligations would face international legal exposure in addition to the constitutional problems identified above.

1.6 The Ethics of Military AI: Philosophical Frameworks and Their Limits

The ethical dimensions of military artificial intelligence have generated a rich philosophical literature in recent years, drawing on traditions of just war theory, deontological ethics, consequentialism, and the emerging field of AI ethics. This analysis examines the principal ethical frameworks as they apply to Bangladesh's specific situation.

The just war tradition, as introduced in Chapter One of Part One of this textbook and developed extensively in subsequent chapters, provides the most historically established framework for evaluating the ethics of weapons systems and military operations. Just war theory distinguishes between jus ad bellum, the justice of going to war, and jus in bello, the justice of how war is conducted once commenced. The ethics of military AI systems primarily falls in the jus in bello

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

domain: assuming that a conflict is justly initiated, can it be justly conducted using AI systems that may reduce or eliminate human decision-making in the targeting process?

The jus in bello principles most directly implicated are distinction, proportionality, and precaution. The principle of distinction requires that combatants distinguish between lawful targets and protected persons and objects, and direct their attacks only against the former. To comply with this principle, any targeting system, human or artificial, must be able to reliably identify the difference between a combatant and a civilian, between a military objective and a protected cultural or religious site, and between a direct participant in hostilities and a person who happens to be in proximity to military activity. The question of whether any artificial intelligence system currently available, or foreseeable within the relevant planning horizon, can make these distinctions with the reliability and contextual sensitivity that the law requires is one that the ICRC and most independent legal scholars answer with considerable skepticism.

The proportionality principle requires that the expected civilian harm of an attack not be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. This is an inherently comparative and contextual judgment that requires weighing incommensurable values, anticipated military gains against anticipated civilian suffering, in circumstances of significant factual uncertainty. Even for highly skilled human decision-makers, proportionality assessment is one of the most demanding requirements of the law of armed conflict. For an AI system, the challenge is even more fundamental: proportionality requires the kind of value judgment that current AI systems cannot genuinely perform, even if they can be programmed to apply a formula that mimics proportionality reasoning in a narrow range of circumstances.

The precautionary principle requires that those planning and executing attacks take all feasible precautions to minimize civilian harm, including verifying that targets are legitimate, choosing means and methods of attack that minimize incidental harm, and refraining from attacks when the expected civilian harm appears excessive. Again, this is a contextual, adaptive principle that requires ongoing reassessment as circumstances evolve, and it is difficult to see how a pre-programmed AI system can genuinely satisfy it in dynamic operational environments.

Kantian deontological ethics adds a further dimension to the analysis. Kant's categorical imperative, in its formulation as the principle of treating persons always as ends in themselves and never merely as means, raises a profound question about autonomous lethal systems: is there something inherently morally impermissible about using a machine to kill a human being, regardless of the military justification for the killing, because it treats the victim not as a moral subject worthy of the judgment of another moral subject but as an object to be processed by an algorithm? This Kantian objection is less about the reliability of AI targeting than about the moral standing of the decision itself: some philosophers argue that the act of taking a human life carries an irreducible moral weight that requires it to be a conscious moral choice made by a morally responsible agent, not a computation executed by a machine.

Consequentialist counterarguments to these deontological objections are not without force. If AI targeting systems could be demonstrated to make fewer errors of distinction than human soldiers who are subject to fear, anger, moral injury, and cognitive overload in combat conditions, the consequentialist case for their use would be significant. The empirical record of human soldiers

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

in actual conflicts, which includes numerous documented cases of unlawful killings driven by emotional states rather than rational military necessity, suggests that the comparison between human and machine error rates in targeting is not straightforwardly favorable to human decision-making. This argument has been made by scholars including Ronald Arkin and John Sullins, and it deserves serious engagement rather than dismissal, even by those who ultimately conclude that meaningful human control must be maintained over lethal force.

The specific philosophical and ethical framework that Bangladesh should adopt for its own governance of military AI must reflect both universal moral considerations and Bangladesh's particular strategic, constitutional, and diplomatic situation. A framework built on the principle of meaningful human control, with progressively demanding criteria for what that control must entail depending on the lethality and targeting complexity of the system in question, and anchored in both the constitutional protection of life under Articles 31 and 32 and the international humanitarian law obligations that bind Bangladesh, would provide an ethically defensible and legally coherent foundation for Bangladesh's military AI governance regime.

CHAPTER TWO: AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS: GLOBAL DEBATES, LEGAL CONTROVERSIES, AND BANGLADESH'S POSITION

2.1 The Architecture of the Global Debate

The international debate about autonomous weapons systems has proceeded for over a decade within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, a 1980 treaty that governs weapons causing excessive injury or having indiscriminate effects. Beginning in 2014, the CCW established an informal Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, tasked with examining the humanitarian, legal, ethical, and operational dimensions of the issue. This group has met repeatedly over the subsequent decade and generated substantial analytical work, but as of 2026 has failed to produce any binding instrument, reflecting the deep geopolitical divisions among major military powers about whether and how to regulate autonomous weapons.

The divisions are stark. The United States, Russia, China, Israel, South Korea, and Australia have all opposed a preemptive legally binding ban on autonomous weapons systems, arguing variously that existing international humanitarian law provides adequate governance, that definitions of autonomous weapons are too contested to support a treaty, and that autonomous systems can in some circumstances actually enhance compliance with humanitarian law by eliminating human emotional factors that cause unlawful killings. The US Department of Defense has introduced the Replicator Initiative, a program aimed at rapidly deploying thousands of autonomous weapons systems across various military domains, and has asserted that existing international humanitarian law adequately addresses the challenges posed by autonomous weapons systems. Autonomous Weapons Systems For the 2026 fiscal year, the Pentagon has requested a record $14.2 billion for AI and autonomous research. Usanas Foundation

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Against this bloc, a growing coalition of states primarily from Africa, Latin America, and smaller Asian and European countries, supported by an extensive network of civil society organizations including the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, has pushed for a legally binding instrument prohibiting or strictly regulating autonomous weapons. In 2023, Austria, on behalf of 27 co-sponsoring states, introduced the first UN General Assembly resolution on lethal autonomous weapons systems, backed by 164 states. Arms Control Association In November 2025, the UN General Assembly's First Committee passed a historic resolution calling to negotiate a legally enforceable LAWS agreement by the Seventh Review Conference in 2026, with 156 nations supporting the resolution, while only five nations strictly rejected it, notably the United States and Russia. Usanas Foundation

This extraordinary diplomatic gap, 156 states in favor against five rejecting, illustrates a characteristic tension in international arms control: the states most capable of producing the weapons are the states most resistant to their regulation, while the states least capable of producing the weapons are the states most enthusiastic about regulation. For Bangladesh, which falls in the latter category but may over time develop or acquire autonomous systems from its partners, the question of where to position itself in this debate has both diplomatic and strategic dimensions.

2.2 Definitional Controversies: What Is an Autonomous Weapons System?

The definitional problem is one of the most technically and politically intractable aspects of the autonomous weapons debate, and Bangladesh's policymakers need to understand it in depth because any legislation, treaty commitment, or operational doctrine on autonomous weapons will ultimately depend on a definition.

The core definitional challenge is distinguishing weapons systems along a spectrum of human-machine interaction rather than placing them in binary categories of "autonomous" and "non-autonomous." The DoD Directive 3000.09, which governs US policy on autonomy in weapons systems, defines an autonomous weapon system as one that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator. This definition focuses on the targeting and engagement function as the critical locus of human control. A cruise missile with a pre-programmed target is not autonomous under this definition because the human made the targeting decision before launch, even though the missile navigates to its target independently. A system that can independently identify and engage targets from a class of objects, such as any armored vehicle within a defined geographic area, without human selection of specific targets is autonomous under this definition.

The ICRC has proposed a broader and more legally grounded definition organized around the concept of critical functions: a system is autonomous to the extent that it independently performs the critical functions of selecting and attacking targets. Under this framework, the degree of autonomy and the degree of human control exist along a continuum, and the legal and ethical significance of a given system depends on where on that continuum its critical functions fall.

A third definitional approach focuses on the time dimension: a system that operates over a very short timescale, such as an automated point defense system that engages incoming missiles in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

milliseconds, may require less stringent human control than a system that operates over longer timescales and in more complex environments where genuine contextual judgment is required. This approach recognizes that some forms of automated lethality, particularly in the defensive and counter-battery domains, may be both operationally necessary and legally defensible even without real-time human approval of each individual engagement.

For Bangladesh, the definitional question has immediate practical relevance because Bangladesh has already acquired or is seeking to acquire systems that sit in contested definitional territory. The air defense systems that Bangladesh is acquiring from Turkey, including reportedly the Hisar series short-range air defense systems and potentially the longer-range Siper system, incorporate varying degrees of automation in their engagement sequences. The degree to which these systems satisfy the principle of meaningful human control at all stages of the engagement process is a question that Bangladesh's defense procurement officials and legal advisers should be explicitly examining and documenting, both for domestic constitutional compliance and for compliance with Bangladesh's international humanitarian law obligations.

2.3 The Accountability Gap: Who Is Responsible When an Autonomous System Kills Unlawfully?

The accountability question is, for many legal scholars and human rights advocates, the single most powerful argument against autonomous weapons systems. International humanitarian law, domestic criminal law, and the constitutional principle of the rule of law all presuppose that when a human being is killed by state violence, there is a legally accountable human agent who made or was responsible for the decision to employ that violence. When a soldier commits a war crime, that soldier, and potentially the commanding officers who ordered or permitted the criminal conduct, are accountable. When a police officer shoots an innocent person, that officer, and potentially supervisors who trained or supervised negligently, face legal consequences.

When an autonomous system kills an innocent person, the accountability chain becomes deeply problematic. The individual operator who activated the system may argue, with some justification, that the system's specific targeting decision was not theirs. The commander who deployed the system may argue that the system was designed and certified to comply with the law of armed conflict and that they are not responsible for its individual targeting errors. The manufacturer may argue that the system performed within its specified parameters and that any failure of compliance with the law of armed conflict reflects the operator's inappropriate deployment of the system rather than a product defect. The procurement official may argue that they relied on technical specifications certified by the manufacturer and validated by defense authorities. This diffusion of responsibility across multiple actors, each of whom can credibly argue that the specific lethal decision was not theirs, is what legal scholars call the accountability gap, and it fundamentally undermines the deterrent function of international humanitarian law.

Bangladesh's domestic law framework for command responsibility, which derives primarily from the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973 as interpreted and developed by the Bangladesh Supreme Court in the extensive war crimes trials conducted since 2010, provides a foundation for thinking through the application of command responsibility doctrine to autonomous weapons. The core principle of command responsibility holds that a military or civilian superior is

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

responsible for the criminal acts of subordinates when the superior knew or should have known that the subordinates were committing or were about to commit crimes and failed to take reasonable measures to prevent or punish them. Whether this doctrine can be extended to cover the criminal acts of an AI system that a commander deploys in circumstances where harm to civilians was foreseeable is an unresolved but analytically tractable question. The answer almost certainly depends on the degree to which the commander who deployed the system understood or should have understood the conditions under which the system would make targeting errors and took adequate steps to mitigate those conditions.

2.4 Bangladesh's Position in International Forums: The Diplomatic Calculus

Bangladesh's position on autonomous weapons systems in international forums has, as of 2026, been somewhat passive: Bangladesh has voted in support of UN General Assembly resolutions calling for regulation, reflecting its solidarity with the majority of developing countries, but has not been an active advocate, has not made formal statements articulating a principled position, and has not engaged deeply with the CCW discussions.

This passivity is diplomatically comfortable but strategically shortsighted for several reasons. First, if a binding international instrument on autonomous weapons systems is eventually negotiated, Bangladesh's interests as a state that may acquire and deploy such systems, and that is also vulnerable to their use by others, will be better protected if Bangladesh has actively participated in shaping the instrument's provisions rather than accepting whatever larger powers negotiate. Second, Bangladesh's status as a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations creates a specific and pressing need to understand how autonomous systems interact with peacekeeping mandates and rules of engagement, an issue that the UN's own Department of Peacekeeping Operations has identified as requiring urgent analysis. Third, Bangladesh's constitutional framework, its human rights commitments, and its diplomatic identity as a champion of the most vulnerable states and peoples in the international system all point toward a position of active engagement with, and principled advocacy for, strong international governance of autonomous weapons.

The position that this textbook argues Bangladesh should adopt in international forums is grounded in its constitutional obligations, its international humanitarian law commitments, its peacekeeping identity, and its strategic interests as a medium-power operating in a complex security environment where autonomous systems in the hands of more powerful neighbors could threaten Bangladesh in ways its conventional military cannot easily counter. Bangladesh should advocate for a legally binding instrument that mandates meaningful human control over all critical targeting functions, establishes clear accountability frameworks applicable to states that deploy autonomous systems, requires transparency in the development and testing of autonomous weapons capabilities, prohibits the deployment of fully autonomous lethal systems in circumstances where meaningful distinction between combatants and civilians cannot be reliably achieved, and establishes a verification and compliance mechanism with real enforcement capacity.

This position is both principled and strategically rational. It protects Bangladesh against the use of autonomous systems by others, positions Bangladesh favorably in the coalition of like-minded

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

states that now constitutes a majority of the international community, and does not foreclose Bangladesh's ability to use appropriately supervised autonomous systems in defensive applications where meaningful human control can be credibly maintained.

CHAPTER THREE: QUANTUM COMPUTING AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS: DEFENSE, CRYPTOGRAPHY, AND THE COMING DECRYPTION SHOCK

3.1 The Quantum Computing Revolution: Technical Foundations for Policy Analysis

Quantum computing is perhaps the most consequential and least understood emerging technology in the defense domain. Unlike the other technologies discussed in this Part, quantum computing does not primarily operate through kinetic effects, through surveillance capabilities, or through autonomous decision-making. Its primary strategic significance is cryptographic: it threatens to undermine the mathematical foundations of virtually every encryption system currently used to protect military communications, state secrets, financial transactions, and digital infrastructure against interception and manipulation.

To understand this threat, it is necessary to engage briefly with the technical foundations of quantum computing at a level of detail sufficient for informed policy analysis, even if not for technical mastery. Classical computers, including every laptop, smartphone, server, and military communications system in use today, store and process information in bits, each of which has a value of either zero or one. Quantum computers, by contrast, use quantum bits or qubits, which exploit the quantum mechanical property of superposition to exist simultaneously as both zero and one until measured. This property, combined with the phenomenon of quantum entanglement between qubits, allows quantum computers to perform certain specific computational operations at speeds that are exponentially faster than any classical computer.

The cryptographic implication follows from the mathematical structure of current encryption systems. The most widely used public-key encryption systems, including RSA and elliptic curve cryptography, which are the foundation of essentially all secure digital communications in the world including military communications, derive their security from the computational difficulty of specific mathematical operations, primarily factoring large integers or solving discrete logarithm problems. These problems are easy to verify but extraordinarily difficult to solve for any classical computer: a problem that would take a classical computer millions of years to solve cannot be cracked before the encrypted information becomes irrelevant.

A sufficiently powerful quantum computer running Shor's algorithm, a quantum algorithm discovered by mathematician Peter Shor in 1994, can solve these problems in hours or days rather than millions of years. If a quantum computer of sufficient power were deployed against

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

currently encrypted communications, it could potentially decrypt virtually all of the secrets that modern encryption is protecting.

3.2 The Strategic Implications: Harvest Now, Decrypt Later and the Q-Day Problem

The strategic urgency of the quantum computing threat is not contingent on the immediate availability of a sufficiently powerful quantum computer. The threat materializes through what cybersecurity analysts call the harvest now, decrypt later strategy. A state or non-state actor with access to the encrypted communications of an adversary can collect and store those communications today and decrypt them when a sufficiently powerful quantum computer becomes available in the future. Since military and diplomatic communications contain secrets that retain their value for years or decades, the harvest now, decrypt later strategy means that the damage from quantum decryption of today's communications will be felt even if quantum computers capable of breaking current encryption do not become available for another decade.

The prospect of a breakthrough in quantum computing capability that renders current encryption suddenly obsolete is sometimes referred to as Q-Day, by analogy with D-Day. The practical impact of Q-Day would be catastrophic for any state whose military and diplomatic communications rely on currently deployed encryption systems: every encrypted secret collected since the introduction of the encryption system would become simultaneously readable by any adversary with a quantum computer. Military plans, weapons system specifications, intelligence sources and methods, diplomatic negotiating positions, financial transaction records, and personal communications of senior officials would all be simultaneously exposed.

The timeline for Q-Day is deeply uncertain. As of early 2026, the most advanced quantum computers available, developed by Google, IBM, and several Chinese research institutions, have demonstrated "quantum advantage" in very narrow computational domains but remain far from having the error-corrected qubit counts necessary to run Shor's algorithm against real-world encryption key lengths. Estimates from leading researchers range from a decade to several decades for the development of cryptographically relevant quantum computers, but these estimates carry very wide uncertainty bands, and historical experience with technology development suggests that both breakthroughs and unexpected obstacles are always possible.

For policy purposes, the key analytical conclusion is not the precise timing of Q-Day but the asymmetry between the lead time required to transition to quantum-resistant encryption systems and the potential speed of quantum computing development. Transitioning a large military and governmental communications infrastructure from current encryption to quantum-resistant encryption, a process sometimes called post-quantum cryptography migration, requires years of planning, procurement, testing, integration, and validation. The United States National Institute of Standards and Technology formally published the first quantum-resistant cryptographic standards in August 2024 after a multi-year evaluation process, a milestone that marks the beginning, not the end, of the migration challenge for states that use US-compatible encryption standards.

3.3 Bangladesh's Quantum Vulnerability: A Structural Assessment

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's specific quantum cryptographic vulnerability requires honest and detailed assessment. At the foundational level, Bangladesh's military and governmental communications infrastructure relies on encryption systems whose security depends on the same mathematical foundations that quantum computing threatens. This is essentially unavoidable given that current encryption systems are the global standard and no state has yet deployed quantum-resistant encryption across its entire communications infrastructure.

The specific vulnerabilities that most concern Bangladesh's strategic planners should include the following categories of information. First, the communications between Bangladesh's armed forces services, particularly any communications relating to operational planning, force movements, weapons acquisitions, and strategic assessments, are vulnerable to harvest now, decrypt later collection by sophisticated state adversaries with the resources to store large quantities of encrypted communications. Both India and China, Bangladesh's largest neighbors and its most significant strategic relationships, have active quantum computing research programs that are well ahead of Bangladesh's. Both states' intelligence services are engaged in signals intelligence collection that certainly includes collection of Bangladeshi military and governmental communications.

Second, Bangladesh's diplomatic communications, including the exchanges between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bangladesh's embassies, the communications of Bangladesh's UN delegation, and the exchanges between Bangladesh's leaders and their foreign counterparts, contain information that retains strategic value over long periods. The exposure of diplomatic negotiating positions, intelligence assessments shared within diplomatic channels, and the personal communications of senior officials would be deeply damaging to Bangladesh's international relationships and its domestic political stability.

Third, Bangladesh's defense procurement communications, which contain commercially sensitive and strategically important information about what systems Bangladesh is acquiring, from whom, at what prices, and on what terms, are a high-priority intelligence target for states that want to understand and potentially disrupt Bangladesh's military modernization program. The communications between Bangladesh's defense procurement officials and foreign suppliers, the internal assessments of Bangladesh's capabilities and requirements, and the deliberations of Bangladesh's defense planning bodies are all vulnerable to the harvest now, decrypt later threat.

3.4 Post-Quantum Cryptography: The Legislative and Institutional Response

Bangladesh's response to the quantum cryptographic threat requires action in three parallel domains: technical, institutional, and legislative. The technical domain involves the actual migration of Bangladesh's military and governmental communications infrastructure to quantum-resistant encryption standards. The institutional domain involves establishing the organizational capacity within Bangladesh's defense and intelligence establishment to manage the ongoing challenge of cryptographic modernization as both the threat and the countermeasures continue to evolve. The legislative domain involves establishing the legal framework within which this migration is mandated, resourced, overseen, and enforced.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

On the technical side, Bangladesh should immediately begin the process of auditing its existing cryptographic infrastructure across the defense, foreign affairs, and critical national infrastructure sectors to identify which systems are most urgently vulnerable and which are most important to protect. This audit should produce a priority-ranked migration roadmap that distinguishes between systems requiring immediate migration, systems requiring migration within five years, and systems where the sensitivity of the information is sufficiently low that the harvest now, decrypt later threat is not operationally significant. The migration roadmap should be aligned with the post-quantum cryptographic standards published by NIST in 2024 and updated as these standards continue to evolve.

On the institutional side, Bangladesh should establish a dedicated National Cryptographic Office or Directorate within its existing intelligence and security architecture, responsible for maintaining situational awareness of the evolving quantum computing threat, setting cryptographic standards for the government and military sectors, overseeing compliance with those standards, and coordinating Bangladesh's participation in international bodies that govern global cryptographic standards. This directorate should have the technical capacity to evaluate foreign-supplied encryption systems for quantum vulnerability and potential adversarial vulnerabilities including backdoors and design weaknesses.

On the legislative side, the National Defense Act that this textbook has advocated throughout its earlier parts should include provisions specifically mandating quantum-resistant encryption for all classified government and military communications above a defined sensitivity threshold, requiring periodic cryptographic review of all government and military communications systems, establishing penalty provisions for negligent failure to comply with cryptographic standards, and creating a legal framework for the classification and protection of cryptographic keys as national security assets.

3.5 The Offensive Dimension: Quantum Sensing and Quantum Communications

The strategic implications of quantum technology extend beyond the decryption threat to include potentially revolutionary capabilities in quantum sensing and quantum communications. These offensive and enabling dimensions are less immediately urgent than the defensive cryptographic challenge but are important for Bangladesh's long-term strategic planning.

Quantum sensing exploits quantum mechanical properties to achieve measurement precision far beyond classical physical limits. Quantum gravimeters, magnetometers, and inertial navigation systems based on quantum principles are already being developed and in some cases deployed by military establishments with advanced quantum research programs. The defense implications include the ability to detect submarines through quantum gravitational anomaly measurement, the ability to navigate with precision in GPS-denied environments using quantum inertial navigation, and the ability to conduct geological sensing that reveals underground facilities, tunnels, and caches invisible to traditional sensors. For Bangladesh, which faces potential military threats that include submarine-based threats to its maritime approaches and possible infiltration of armed groups through underground tunnel networks in its southeastern borders, quantum sensing could eventually have significant operational relevance.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Quantum communications, specifically quantum key distribution, exploits the quantum property of measurement disturbance to create theoretically unbreakable cryptographic key exchange: any attempt to intercept a quantum key distribution transmission physically alters the quantum states being transmitted, revealing the interception to both parties. China has been the world leader in quantum communications deployment, having established the world's first quantum satellite communications network that allows quantum key distribution over thousands of kilometers. Several Chinese cities and key governmental and military facilities are already connected by quantum-secured communications links. If China's quantum communications advantage continues to develop, it will create a growing asymmetry between China's cryptographic security and that of states like Bangladesh that lack access to quantum communications infrastructure.

CHAPTER FOUR: CYBER WARFARE AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL: DOCTRINE, LAW, AND BANGLADESH'S DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

4.1 The Strategic Architecture of Cyber Warfare

Cyber warfare has evolved from a technical curiosity discussed primarily in computer science departments to one of the most consequential strategic domains of contemporary international competition. The evolution has been driven by the progressive digitization of critical national infrastructure, military command and control systems, economic institutions, and political communication, each of which creates both operational capabilities and exploitable vulnerabilities.

The intellectual framework for understanding cyber warfare at the strategic level draws on the same traditions of deterrence theory, coercive bargaining, and escalation management that were developed for nuclear and conventional military competition, but requires significant adaptation because cyber warfare has distinctive operational characteristics that make direct analogies to conventional or nuclear warfare misleading in important respects.

The most fundamental distinctive characteristic is the offense-defense balance. In conventional military competition, the relative effectiveness of offensive and defensive capabilities shapes deterrence, arms races, and crisis stability in well-understood ways. In cyber warfare, the offense appears to hold a persistent and structural advantage over the defense, for several reasons. The surface area available for attack, the aggregate of all digital systems that can be compromised, grows continuously as digitization advances, while the defender must protect all of it while the attacker needs only to find and exploit a single vulnerability. The detection of intrusions is slow and difficult compared to the speed of exploitation. Attribution, identifying the actual state or non-state actor responsible for a cyber attack, is technically difficult and easily obscured by routing attacks through third-party systems. And the technical skills required for sophisticated cyber offense can be acquired by relatively small, well-trained teams working on limited budgets, creating a potential for cyber warfare capabilities by actors who cannot match adversaries in conventional military domains.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

For Bangladesh, the offense-defense asymmetry in cyber warfare has a specific strategic implication: the cost of attacking Bangladesh's digital infrastructure is much lower, relative to the damage that can be caused, than the cost of attacking Bangladesh by conventional military means. Any state or sophisticated non-state actor that wishes to coerce Bangladesh, disrupt its economy, compromise its intelligence, or destabilize its political processes can potentially do so through cyber means at a fraction of the diplomatic and military cost of conventional coercion. This is not theoretical: cyber attacks on critical national infrastructure, including power grids, banking systems, and governmental databases, have become routine instruments of geopolitical competition for all the major powers in Bangladesh's strategic environment.

4.2 The Taxonomy of Cyber Threats to Bangladesh

Bangladesh faces cyber threats across a spectrum that ranges from criminal cyber activity through state-sponsored espionage to potentially disruptive or destructive attacks on critical national infrastructure. The most important categories for strategic analysis are the following.

Cyber espionage directed at Bangladesh's governmental, military, and economic institutions has been a persistent reality for at least a decade. The most sophisticated cyber espionage operations against Bangladesh have been attributed, in the open-source analytical community with varying levels of confidence, to Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani state actors, each of which has motives for intelligence collection about Bangladesh's governmental decisions, military capabilities, diplomatic positions, and economic plans. The 2016 Bangladesh Bank heist, in which cyber criminals exploited weaknesses in the SWIFT banking system to steal nearly 81 million dollars from Bangladesh Bank's account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, though not itself a state-sponsored intelligence operation, demonstrated the depth of vulnerability in Bangladesh's financial infrastructure and the catastrophic potential of sophisticated cyber attacks on critical economic systems.

Cyber operations aimed at influencing Bangladesh's political processes constitute a second category of threat that has grown significantly in strategic importance. The deployment of disinformation campaigns through social media platforms, the compromise of political communications to expose or fabricate embarrassing or damaging material, the manipulation of online public discourse to inflame ethnic or political tensions, and the potential compromise of electoral systems are all forms of gray zone cyber operation that major powers with interests in Bangladesh's political direction have the capability and potentially the motive to conduct. Bangladesh's political environment, with its sharp polarization between major political blocs and its history of violent political competition, makes it particularly vulnerable to cyber-enabled political manipulation.

Attacks on critical national infrastructure represent the most destructive potential category of cyber threat. Bangladesh's power grid, its increasingly digital financial system, its container port at Chittagong which is the lifeline of its export economy, its telecommunications infrastructure, and its water and sewage treatment systems are all potential targets for destructive cyber operations by state actors in a crisis or conflict scenario. The vulnerability of Bangladesh's power grid is of particular concern given its already fragile reliability under normal operational conditions: a sophisticated cyber attack that triggered widespread grid failures during a period of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

geopolitical tension could generate significant humanitarian consequences while denying Bangladesh's military and security forces the electrical power their operations require.

4.3 Bangladesh's Cyber Defense Architecture: An Assessment

Bangladesh's national cyber defense architecture, as of 2026, consists of several interconnected but inadequately coordinated institutional elements. The Bangladesh Computer Council, under the ICT Division, manages governmental IT infrastructure and has nominal responsibility for cybersecurity in the civilian governmental domain. The Bangladesh e-Government Computer Incident Response Team, established in 2015, provides incident response services for governmental networks. The military services each maintain their own signals and communications security capabilities, which are not deeply integrated with the civilian cyber defense architecture. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission has some authority over telecommunications network security standards. And the Digital Security Agency, established under the Digital Security Act 2018 with significantly expanded authority under the successor Cyber Security Act 2023, has both investigative powers related to cyber crimes and some responsibility for national cyber security standards.

The fragmentation of this architecture among multiple agencies with overlapping mandates and inadequate coordination mechanisms is a structural weakness that sophisticated adversaries can exploit. A cyber attack that crosses the boundaries between civilian governmental, military, and critical infrastructure domains requires a coordinated national response that the current institutional architecture is poorly equipped to deliver. The absence of a single National Cyber Security Authority with clear authority across all domains, adequate resources, and genuine operational coordination capacity is one of the most significant institutional gaps in Bangladesh's security architecture.

The legal framework governing Bangladesh's cyber defense is similarly fragmented and in important respects inadequate. The Cyber Security Act 2023, which replaced the controversial Digital Security Act 2018, addresses primarily criminal cyber activities and information security offenses. It does not provide a comprehensive framework for national cyber defense operations, does not clearly authorize offensive cyber operations, does not establish a legal framework for cyber crisis management, and does not address the specific challenges of state-sponsored cyber attacks that fall below the threshold of armed conflict under international law but above the threshold of ordinary criminal cyber activity.

This legal gap has constitutional dimensions. Bangladesh's Constitution does not address cyber warfare or cyber security directly, for the obvious reason that these concepts did not exist when the Constitution was drafted. But the constitutional framework for emergency powers, the right to life and personal liberty under Articles 31 and 32, the fundamental principles of governance under the Constitution's Preamble, and the constitutional mandate of the state to protect its citizens all create an implicit constitutional framework within which a comprehensive National Cyber Security Act should be grounded.

4.4 The International Legal Framework for Cyber Warfare: The Tallinn Manual and Its Relevance to Bangladesh

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The most authoritative attempt to clarify how existing international law applies to cyber operations is the Tallinn Manual, first published in 2013 and updated in a second edition in 2017 by a group of independent experts convened by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. While the Tallinn Manual is not itself a legally binding instrument and its conclusions are contested in some respects, it represents the most systematic attempt to apply existing international law, including the law of state responsibility, the law of the use of force, and international humanitarian law, to the cyber domain.

The Tallinn Manual's application of the use of force analysis under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter to cyber operations is particularly relevant for Bangladesh. The manual concludes that a cyber operation constitutes a use of force if its scale and effects are comparable to a use of force through conventional means: a cyber attack that destroys physical infrastructure, causes significant casualties, or compels state action through coercion would cross the use of force threshold and give the targeted state the right to respond with countermeasures, including potentially conventional military force, in self-defense.

Below the use of force threshold, the Tallinn Manual recognizes that states have the right to respond to hostile cyber operations through countermeasures that are themselves non-forcible: in particular, retaliatory or defensive cyber operations that are proportionate to the original intrusion and that cease when the intrusion ends. This framework creates a significant practical challenge for Bangladesh: the attribution of cyber attacks is technically and legally demanding, the proportionality assessment for cyber countermeasures is genuinely complex, and Bangladesh's current legal framework does not clearly authorize offensive cyber operations even in the context of self-defense responses.

The development of a comprehensive national cyber security legislation for Bangladesh should explicitly engage with the Tallinn Manual framework, not as legally binding on Bangladesh but as the most authoritative available synthesis of how existing international law applies to cyber operations. Bangladesh's cyber security legislation should clarify the legal authority for defensive cyber operations, establish the framework for proportionate cyber countermeasures in response to documented hostile cyber operations, define the decision-making process and oversight requirements for any offensive cyber operations Bangladesh might choose to conduct, and address Bangladesh's obligations under international law not to knowingly permit its territory and infrastructure to be used as a base for cyber attacks against other states.

4.5 Cyber Sovereignty and the Philosophical Dimensions

The concept of cyber sovereignty has emerged in recent years as a contested but increasingly important principle in international discussions about the governance of the digital domain. At its core, cyber sovereignty refers to the assertion of state authority over the digital infrastructure and digital communications within a state's territory, analogous to the state's traditional sovereign authority over its physical territory.

China has been the most prominent and systematic advocate of cyber sovereignty, establishing the Great Firewall of China to control what digital content is accessible within Chinese territory, asserting the right to direct domestic internet platforms as instruments of national policy, and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

advocating in international forums for a model of internet governance organized around state sovereign authority rather than the multistakeholder model favored by Western states.

For Bangladesh, the question of cyber sovereignty is not merely a technical or diplomatic question but a constitutional and philosophical one. Bangladesh's Constitution guarantees freedom of thought and conscience under Article 39, freedom of expression within the bounds of reasonable legal restrictions, and freedom of the press. These constitutional guarantees have been progressively constrained over the years by legislation including the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006, the Digital Security Act 2018, and the Cyber Security Act 2023, each of which has been criticized by civil society organizations, journalists, and international human rights bodies for its chilling effects on free expression.

The philosophical tradition that most directly illuminates the tension between cyber sovereignty and digital freedom is the liberal tradition from Locke through Mill to contemporary theorists of democracy and free expression. John Stuart Mill's harm principle, articulated in On Liberty in 1859, held that the only legitimate basis for restricting individual freedom is to prevent harm to others. The application of this principle to digital communications requires confronting genuinely difficult questions: online speech can cause real harm through the spread of disinformation, incitement to violence, and facilitation of terrorist recruitment; but heavy-handed restrictions on digital expression can silence legitimate political dissent, undermine democratic accountability, and enable the authoritarian use of cyber security architecture for political repression.

Bangladesh's experience with the misuse of the Digital Security Act 2018 for the prosecution of journalists, activists, and political opponents demonstrates concretely the danger of cyber security legislation that combines broad substantive prohibitions with inadequate procedural safeguards and an institutional architecture that is not genuinely independent of political influence. The development of a new National Cyber Security Act as part of the legislative reform agenda proposed in this textbook must grapple seriously with this tension, establishing substantive and procedural safeguards that prevent the weaponization of cyber security law against legitimate democratic expression while genuinely addressing the serious and growing threats to Bangladesh's digital security.

CHAPTER FIVE: DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS: THE NEXT GENERATION OF AIR DEFENSE AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH

5.1 Directed Energy Weapons: Technical Overview for Strategic Analysis

Directed energy weapons use highly focused forms of energy, primarily high-power lasers and high-power microwave systems, as direct means of attack or defense rather than as guidance or sensing systems for kinetic weapons. Their development has a long history in defense research, stretching back to early laser development in the 1960s and accelerated by the Strategic Defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Initiative of the Reagan era. For most of this history, directed energy weapons remained at the experimental stage because the power generation and beam control technologies necessary for operational effectiveness could not be packaged in militarily deployable form.

The technological breakthrough that has made directed energy weapons operationally relevant in the 2020s is primarily in the domain of solid-state laser technology, which has achieved dramatic improvements in efficiency, beam quality, and power density that have allowed the development of systems compact and reliable enough for deployment on ships, ground vehicles, and eventually aircraft. The most widely deployed operational system as of 2026 is the United States Navy's Laser Weapon System Demonstrator, which has conducted combat intercepts of UAVs and small boats, and Israel's Iron Beam directed energy air defense system, which in late 2025 accelerated the deployment of the Iron Beam, a laser system that uses autonomous targeting to neutralize incoming threats at a speed no human operator could match. Usanas Foundation

The strategic significance of directed energy air defense for Bangladesh's specific security situation is particularly high. Bangladesh's most pressing air defense requirements include defense against UAV threats, which have emerged from Myanmar's ongoing conflict as a potential cross-border problem, as well as defense against short-range rockets and artillery projectiles and any future precision-guided munition threats from state actors. Conventional air defense systems, whether man-portable surface-to-air missiles or more sophisticated radar-guided systems, face a cost-exchange problem that becomes increasingly severe as the threat becomes numerically larger: a single interceptor missile costing thousands or tens of thousands of dollars to intercept a UAV costing hundreds of dollars is a sustainably unfavorable exchange for the defender.

Directed energy weapons fundamentally alter this cost exchange. The marginal cost of firing a high-power laser at an incoming drone is primarily the cost of the electrical power consumed, which can be as low as a few dollars per shot when the power is generated by the platform's own onboard generation system. Against swarm attacks by inexpensive UAVs or by cheap rockets and mortar rounds, a laser defense system that can engage unlimited targets at minimal marginal cost is strategically revolutionary in a way that no conventional missile-based system can match.

5.2 The Bangladesh Air Defense Modernization Context

As analyzed extensively in Part Ten of this textbook, Bangladesh's air defense modernization is one of the most pressing elements of its Forces Goal 2030 program. The reported acquisition of Turkish air defense systems, including potentially the Hisar short-range air defense platform and the longer-range Siper system, represents a significant enhancement of Bangladesh's layered air defense capability. But these are conventional missile-based systems, and their integration into a coherent layered air defense architecture that includes a directed energy component represents the next logical step in Bangladesh's air defense development.

The challenge for Bangladesh is that directed energy weapons of current-generation capability remain expensive to acquire and technically demanding to operate and maintain. The systems deployed by the United States and Israel require sophisticated power generation infrastructure, precision thermal management systems, advanced beam control electronics, and operator training

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that is not currently available in Bangladesh's military establishment. The acquisition of such systems, even through transfer from a defense partner, would require substantial capacity building in technical maintenance and operational expertise before the systems could be reliably fielded.

Turkey's defense industry, which has become one of Bangladesh's primary defense partners, has its own directed energy weapon development program through ASELSAN and ROKETSAN, though these programs are less mature than the American and Israeli equivalents. The potential for directed energy technology transfer within the Turkey-Bangladesh defense partnership is worth exploring seriously, as it would align with the defense industrial capacity-building agenda developed in Part Ten of this textbook.

The legal dimensions of directed energy weapons are also worth examining. The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons includes Protocol IV specifically prohibiting laser weapons designed to cause permanent blindness to the human eye. This protocol, which Bangladesh has ratified, applies specifically to anti-personnel laser systems designed as a primary weapon to blind people, and does not apply to laser air defense systems designed to defeat UAVs, missiles, and other non-human targets. The legal status of directed energy systems that might incidentally cause eye injury to personnel operating targeted vehicles or aircraft is less clear and would require careful legal analysis under both IHL and the CCW Protocol IV before Bangladesh deployed such systems in circumstances where such incidental effects were foreseeable.

5.3 High-Power Microwave Systems and Electronic Warfare

High-power microwave directed energy systems represent a second category of directed energy weapon with significant potential relevance for Bangladesh. Unlike laser systems that defeat targets through thermal effects, high-power microwave systems generate intense electromagnetic pulse effects that damage or destroy electronic systems. Their primary military applications include counter-electronics, defeating incoming missiles, rockets, and UAVs by destroying their electronic guidance systems, counter-drone applications, and potentially electronic attack against adversary command and control infrastructure.

The EMP-like effects of high-power microwave systems also create potential applications as non-lethal crowd control and area denial weapons in law enforcement or counterinsurgency contexts. The use of directed energy weapons, whether laser or microwave, in such non-combat contexts raises distinct legal and human rights concerns. The UN Human Rights Council and several international treaty bodies have expressed concern about the development and deployment of directed energy weapons in law enforcement contexts, given the potential for invisible, deniable, and difficult-to-document physical harm to protesters and dissidents. For Bangladesh, whose security forces have faced consistent criticism from international human rights bodies for their use of lethal and potentially excessive force in crowd control and counterterrorism operations, the acquisition of directed energy weapons for non-military law enforcement applications would need to be approached with extreme caution and subject to rigorous oversight and legal constraint.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: SPACE-BASED ASSETS AND MILITARY OPERATIONS: BANGLADESH'S PLACE IN THE CONTESTED SPACE DOMAIN

6.1 The Militarization and Weaponization of Space: Historical and Contemporary Context

The militarization of outer space, meaning the use of space-based assets to support military operations, began almost simultaneously with the development of space technology in the late 1950s. The first military satellites were reconnaissance platforms, designed to provide photographic intelligence of adversary territory that was unobtainable through any other means, and they immediately became strategically invaluable. By the time of the Gulf War in 1990 to 1991, the United States demonstrated that space-based assets, including navigation satellites that enabled precision targeting, communications satellites that linked dispersed forces, and intelligence satellites that provided real-time battlefield awareness, had become integral to the conduct of modern military operations. Military analysts described the Gulf War as the first "space war" in the sense that space-based systems were decisive enablers of the coalition's military success.

The three decades since the Gulf War have only deepened the dependence of modern military operations on space-based assets. Global positioning systems, now including not only the American GPS but also the Russian GLONASS, the Chinese BeiDou, and the European Galileo systems, have become embedded in essentially every precision-guided weapon, every military navigation system, and every digital communications network. Communications satellites provide the bandwidth that allows the distributed network-centric warfare that characterizes modern military operations. Reconnaissance and intelligence satellites have evolved from film-return systems with day-old imagery to near-real-time electrooptical, synthetic aperture radar, and signals intelligence platforms that provide continuous surveillance of practically any point on Earth's surface. Early warning satellites detect missile launches within minutes of ignition. And a growing constellation of commercial remote-sensing satellites, operated by companies like Planet Labs, Maxar Technologies, and numerous others, provides essentially anyone with internet access a level of overhead surveillance that was previously available only to superpower intelligence agencies.

The weaponization of space, meaning the deployment of weapons in space or weapons designed to attack space assets, remains formally prohibited by the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, Article IV of which prohibits the placement of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in space and prohibits military bases, weapons testing, and military maneuvers on celestial bodies, but does not prohibit conventional weapons in space orbit. Despite this formal prohibition, all the major space-faring powers have developed and tested anti-satellite weapons that can destroy satellites in low Earth orbit using kinetic impactors, direct-ascent missiles, or co-orbital attack systems. China conducted a widely publicized anti-satellite missile test in 2007 that destroyed one of its own weather satellites at altitude, generating an enormous debris field that continues to endanger other satellites. The United States, Russia, and India have conducted their own anti-

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

satellite weapon tests, creating a dangerous and accelerating dynamic of space militarization that the existing international legal framework is inadequately equipped to govern.

6.2 Bangladesh's Space Assets: BangaSat-1 and the Military Dimension

Bangladesh made its entry into satellite ownership in May 2018 with the launch of BangaBandhu Satellite-1 from the United States, a geostationary communications satellite built by Thales Alenia Space of France and operated by Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited. BangaBandhu Satellite-1 covers the Bangladesh domestic market and portions of the South Asian and Southeast Asian regions, providing primarily broadcasting and broadband services. A second satellite, BangaBandhu Satellite-2, is planned and in development.

BangaBandhu Satellite-1 is a civilian communications satellite with no direct military mission. But the development of Bangladesh's satellite capability has obvious potential military applications. Military communications through a domestically controlled satellite rather than through leased capacity on foreign satellites reduces the potential for communications disruption by foreign satellite operators, eliminates the intelligence exposure associated with routing military communications through foreign-operated satellites, and provides a degree of communications resilience that is strategically important in scenarios where terrestrial and submarine cable communications might be disrupted.

Bangladesh's Forces Goal 2030 and its successor planning frameworks have not, at least in publicly documented form, articulated a comprehensive military space strategy. This is a significant gap. The military space domain is no longer an exotic concern for only the largest military establishments: small satellites, particularly in low Earth orbit constellations, have become affordable and technically accessible even for states with relatively modest space budgets. A Bangladesh military communications satellite, a small Earth observation satellite dedicated to supporting the Bangladesh Armed Forces' intelligence and targeting requirements, and eventually a signals intelligence satellite could collectively transform Bangladesh's military space posture at a cost that is not disproportionate to Bangladesh's overall defense investment.

6.3 The Commercial Satellite Revolution and Bangladesh's Intelligence Capabilities

The commercial satellite imagery revolution has already transformed the intelligence landscape for states like Bangladesh, even without any indigenous military satellite capability. Commercial providers including Planet Labs, Maxar, and ICEYE provide satellite imagery of essentially any point on Earth at resolutions that were classified military capabilities less than a decade ago. Planet's constellation of Dove and SkySat satellites provides daily coverage of essentially the entire Earth's surface, with the most frequently updated images available at sub-meter resolution. ICEYE's commercial synthetic aperture radar constellation provides all-weather, day-and-night imaging capability.

For Bangladesh's intelligence and defense requirements, the most immediately valuable application of commercial satellite imagery is monitoring developments along Bangladesh's borders, particularly the Myanmar border where the Rakhine State conflict is generating cross-

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

border flows of armed groups, weapons, and displaced persons that Bangladesh needs to track for both security and humanitarian management purposes. Regular commercial satellite imagery of the border region, integrated with Bangladesh's signals intelligence collection and ground-based surveillance, would dramatically improve Bangladesh's border security situational awareness.

The India border also presents intelligence monitoring requirements, primarily for early warning of any unusual military movements near the border that might precede a crisis or conflict. India's overwhelming conventional military superiority means that Bangladesh cannot meaningfully defend against a major Indian military operation, but the strategic value of early warning is not primarily to enable defensive military action: it is to provide the political and diplomatic lead time necessary to engage the international community and seek the kind of outside mediation and pressure that is Bangladesh's most realistic mechanism for managing a crisis with India.

The Bay of Bengal maritime domain, addressed extensively in Part Six of this textbook, is the third area where commercial satellite imagery provides Bangladesh with immediately useful intelligence capability. The ability to track ship movements in Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone, monitor illegal fishing activities, and detect the approach of suspicious vessels toward Bangladesh's coast and maritime infrastructure can be substantially enhanced by commercial satellite imagery available at costs well within Bangladesh's intelligence budget.

6.4 Anti-Satellite Capabilities and the Space Security Dilemma

Bangladesh does not possess and has no credible near-term path to developing indigenous anti-satellite capabilities. This is not a significant strategic gap, because anti-satellite capabilities are primarily of military relevance for states engaged in peer or near-peer competition in which space-based intelligence and communications assets play a decisive operational role. Bangladesh's military threat scenarios, as analyzed throughout this textbook, do not include peer competition with a state that itself relies heavily on space-based military assets. Bangladesh's most plausible conflict scenarios involve non-state armed groups, border management challenges with Myanmar, and potentially maritime disputes, none of which involve adversaries that possess space-based military assets that Bangladesh would benefit from attacking.

Where space security matters directly for Bangladesh is as a potential vulnerability rather than a capability. Bangladesh's military communications, navigation, and eventually intelligence systems will become increasingly dependent on space-based assets, and any disruption to those assets, whether through hostile anti-satellite attacks, through solar weather events, or through the growing problem of orbital debris from anti-satellite weapon tests and satellite breakups, creates military operational risks that Bangladesh's planners must account for.

The mitigation strategy for Bangladesh's space-based asset vulnerability involves several elements: maintaining terrestrial backup communications systems that can substitute for satellite communications if necessary, diversifying across multiple satellite systems with different orbital regimes and different geographical operators so that no single disruption can eliminate all communications capability, contributing to and supporting international diplomatic efforts to develop norms and rules for responsible behavior in space that include restrictions on anti-

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

satellite weapon testing, and participating in international space situational awareness networks that provide early warning of threats to orbiting assets.

6.5 The Legal Framework for Military Space Operations: International Law and Bangladesh's Obligations

The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, to which Bangladesh is a party, establishes the foundational legal framework for state behavior in space. Its key provisions for military purposes include the prohibition on weapons of mass destruction in space, the requirement that space exploration and use benefit all countries, the prohibition on national appropriation of celestial bodies, and the principle that outer space shall be used for peaceful purposes. Bangladesh has ratified the Outer Space Treaty and its associated agreements including the Rescue Agreement, the Liability Convention, and the Registration Convention.

The phrase "peaceful purposes" in the Outer Space Treaty has been interpreted differently by different states. The United States has consistently maintained that "peaceful purposes" means "non-aggressive" rather than "non-military," effectively allowing military uses of space that do not constitute aggressive acts. Russia and China have argued for a broader interpretation that would limit military uses of space more substantially. The practical consequence of the American interpretation has been that reconnaissance, navigation, and communications satellites with military applications are treated as lawful under the Outer Space Treaty even when their primary purpose is to support military operations.

The development of dedicated space arms control law has been proposed repeatedly, most notably through the Russian-Chinese draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, but has not been successfully negotiated, primarily because of American opposition. The United States has instead pursued a policy of developing voluntary international "responsible behaviors" norms for space operations, a softer approach that preserves American freedom of action in space.

Bangladesh's position in space law discussions should reflect both its treaty obligations under existing instruments and its interest as a state that is increasingly dependent on space-based assets but lacks the military space capabilities to protect them. Bangladesh should support international diplomatic efforts to develop binding norms against anti-satellite weapon testing that generates orbital debris, to establish liability frameworks for damage caused by military space operations, and to develop transparency and confidence-building measures that reduce the risk of misunderstandings escalating into conflict in the space domain.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DRONE WARFARE, UNMANNED SYSTEMS, AND THE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE FOR BANGLADESH

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.1 The Drone Revolution: From Reconnaissance to Contested Battlespace

The military utilization of unmanned aerial vehicles has progressed within three decades from an experimental reconnaissance platform confined to the most technologically advanced military establishments to a ubiquitous instrument of warfare accessible to state and non-state actors across the capability and wealth spectrum. The trajectory of this development is one of the most significant and consequential in modern military history, and its implications for Bangladesh's defense posture are direct and urgent.

The first generation of military UAVs, exemplified by the American Predator and Global Hawk systems deployed in the 1990s and 2000s, were primarily high-endurance reconnaissance platforms and, in their armed variants, precision strike systems operated from ground stations thousands of kilometers from their operational areas. These systems required substantial ground infrastructure, satellite communications bandwidth, and trained operator cadres that confined their use to the most resource-rich military establishments. Their strategic impact was significant in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency contexts, particularly in the American campaigns in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, but their high cost and operational complexity limited their proliferation.

The second generation, exemplified by the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 that achieved global attention in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and subsequently in Ukraine, demonstrated that medium-altitude long-endurance armed UAVs with sophisticated electro-optical and electronic warfare capabilities could be produced and operated at costs that put them within the reach of a much wider range of states. The TB2's performance in Nagorno-Karabakh, where it served as a decisive operational instrument in Armenia's defeat, and subsequently in Ukraine, where it inflicted significant attrition on Russian armored and logistical elements in the early weeks of the 2022 invasion, demonstrated that UAVs operating in permissive or contested airspace could fundamentally alter the operational calculus of ground warfare.

The third generation, which is now emerging and accelerating, is characterized by the democratization of UAV production and the development of expendable swarm systems. The Ukraine conflict in particular has driven explosive innovation in cheap, expendable first-person-view attack drones that can be produced for a few hundred dollars each and weaponized with commercial or improvised explosive charges. The operational concept of these systems, which can be deployed in large numbers to overwhelm conventional air defense systems through sheer volume, represents a threat that existing layered air defense architectures were not designed to address at scale.

7.2 Myanmar as a Drone Warfare Laboratory on Bangladesh's Doorstep

The Myanmar civil conflict, which began following the military coup of February 2021 and has intensified progressively since, has become one of the most intensive theaters of drone warfare in the world, and it is geographically immediate to Bangladesh. The various parties to the Myanmar conflict, including the Tatmadaw or Myanmar Armed Forces, the various ethnic armed organizations including the Arakan Army and the Three Brotherhood Alliance, and the People's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Defense Force militias affiliated with the opposition National Unity Government, have all incorporated drones extensively into their tactical operations.

The Arakan Army, which controls substantial territory in Rakhine State directly adjacent to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar District and the Naf River border, has been reported to employ commercially available drones for reconnaissance and targeting and has reportedly adapted commercial quadcopters for improvised explosive delivery. The Tatmadaw has employed its own military UAVs for air strikes on resistance-controlled areas, and these strikes have occasionally strayed close to the Bangladesh border.

For Bangladesh, the drone warfare dynamics in Myanmar create three categories of security concern. The first is the risk of inadvertent border violations by armed drones operating in the chaotic conditions of the Myanmar conflict, creating potentially serious diplomatic incidents and potentially exposing Bangladeshi border communities and security personnel to harm. The second is the potential for deliberately targeted drone attacks by armed groups seeking to intimidate or coerce Bangladesh in relation to border policy, Rohingya refugee management, or other issues where Bangladesh's choices affect armed groups' interests. The third is the longer-term concern that the diffusion of drone production and operational expertise in Myanmar, including potentially to non-state actors, creates a terrorist or criminal drone threat to Bangladesh's own territory.

Bangladesh's Armed Forces have developed some counter-drone capabilities, and the acquisition of sophisticated air defense systems with counter-UAV modes addresses part of this requirement. But effective counter-drone operations in a complex border environment like the Naf River corridor, where the threats are likely to be low-flying, commercially derived UAVs operating in terrain that challenges conventional radar detection, requires specific capabilities including low-altitude radar, electronic warfare systems capable of jamming commercial UAV control frequencies, and directed energy systems of the kind discussed earlier in this Part.

7.3 Bangladesh's Own UAV Development and Acquisition

Bangladesh has made initial efforts toward developing an indigenous UAV capability, primarily through the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and the Bangladesh Armed Forces' own research and development activities. These efforts remain at an early stage relative to the operational requirements of the security environment Bangladesh faces.

The Bangladesh Army has reportedly displayed small indigenous UAVs at defense exhibitions, and Bangladesh has expressed interest in acquiring more capable military UAVs through its existing defense partnerships. The China option includes the CH series and Wing Loong UAV systems, which China has exported to numerous countries and which would be compatible with Bangladesh's existing Chinese-origin equipment inventory. The Turkey option includes the Bayraktar TB2, which Bangladesh's defense planners have expressed interest in and which would align with the broader deepening of the Turkey-Bangladesh defense partnership. Both options have merit, and the analysis of their relative advantages requires examining not only the platforms themselves but the training, maintenance, ground support infrastructure, and spare parts supply chain implications of each.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The indigenous UAV development path deserves serious investment alongside any foreign acquisition program, for the same defense industrial autonomy reasons developed in Part Ten of this textbook. UAV production is more technically accessible than fighter aircraft or submarine production: the core technologies of airframe construction, propulsion, navigation, and control are increasingly available through commercial dual-use supply chains, and several states at a comparable level of technological development to Bangladesh, including Iran, Turkey in its early development phase, and Ethiopia, have developed meaningful indigenous UAV production capabilities. The Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and the Bangladesh Ordnance Factories together could potentially provide the foundation for an indigenous UAV development and production program given appropriate resource allocation, institutional coordination, and a commitment from the defense establishment to invest in indigenously produced systems even when their initial performance falls below what is available from foreign suppliers.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ELECTRONIC WARFARE, SIGNALS INTELLIGENCE, AND THE INVISIBLE BATTLEFIELD

8.1 The Electromagnetic Spectrum as a Strategic Domain

Electronic warfare, broadly defined as military action involving the use of the electromagnetic spectrum to attack, exploit, or protect against adversary actions in that spectrum, has been an integral element of military operations since the First World War. Its strategic importance has grown continuously with the progressive dependence of modern military operations on electromagnetic spectrum-enabled systems: radars, communications, navigation, precision guidance, remote sensing, and cyber operations all rely on the electromagnetic spectrum and are therefore both enabled and vulnerable in that domain.

The three traditional categories of electronic warfare, electronic attack, electronic protection, and electronic support, remain analytically useful. Electronic attack uses electromagnetic energy to deny, degrade, disrupt, or destroy adversary use of the spectrum, primarily through jamming of communications and radar systems. Electronic protection involves measures taken to protect friendly use of the spectrum against adversary electronic attack. Electronic support refers to the collection and analysis of electromagnetic emissions for intelligence and targeting purposes, overlapping substantially with signals intelligence.

The contemporary electronic warfare environment has been dramatically complicated by the proliferation of emitters, the increasing use of frequency-agile systems that are difficult to jam, and the emergence of cognitive electronic warfare systems that use machine learning to automatically adapt jamming waveforms and frequencies to defeat adversary anti-jamming techniques. The Ukraine conflict has been described by military analysts as the most intensive electronic warfare environment since the Second World War, with both sides deploying advanced jamming, counter-jamming, and signals intelligence systems against each other's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

drones, communications, and precision-guided munitions with results that have fundamentally reshaped operational realities on both sides.

For Bangladesh, the electronic warfare domain is strategically important in multiple respects. Bangladesh's most significant electronic warfare vulnerability is in the domain of GPS jamming and spoofing. Bangladesh's military precision guidance systems, navigation systems, and communications networks are all GPS-dependent, and GPS jamming is a relatively accessible capability: commercially available GPS jammers, though illegal in most jurisdictions including Bangladesh, are widely available, and military-grade GPS jamming systems have been proliferating among military establishments in Bangladesh's region, including India, China, and the militaries of Southeast Asia. Any scenario in which Bangladesh's GPS-dependent military systems were subject to systematic jamming would severely degrade their operational effectiveness.

8.2 Signals Intelligence and Its Constitutional Constraints

Signals intelligence, the collection and analysis of adversary electronic emissions including communications intercepts, radar emissions, and electronic signatures, is one of the most valuable intelligence disciplines available to any state's military and security establishment. Its value derives from the extraordinary volume of militarily relevant information that is routinely transmitted through electromagnetic means and the difficulty of entirely preventing that transmission in an operationally effective military force.

Bangladesh's signals intelligence capabilities are constrained by the same budgetary and institutional limitations that affect other dimensions of its intelligence architecture. Bangladesh does not possess the extensive satellite-based signals collection infrastructure of the major powers, the global network of listening posts and forward-deployed collection platforms that characterize the major intelligence establishments, or the large cadres of technically trained signals intelligence analysts with language capabilities across the range of signals Bangladesh would benefit from collecting. What Bangladesh does possess, potentially, is a geographically advantageous position for collecting signals from Myanmar, which passes through areas of Bangladesh's territory and airspace, and a growing capacity in digital interception of communications transmitted through the internet and mobile telecommunications infrastructure of its neighbors.

The constitutional and legal constraints on signals intelligence collection require careful analysis. Within Bangladesh's own territory, the collection of communications by state agencies is governed by a complex and often inconsistently applied framework of constitutional protections, statutory authorizations, and administrative practices. Article 43 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the right to privacy of correspondence and communication, while statutes including the Bangladesh Telecommunications Act 2001 and the Postal Act provide specific frameworks for lawful interception that establish both the authority and the procedural requirements for intelligence-directed communications collection.

The signals intelligence collection activities of Bangladesh's military and intelligence agencies against foreign targets, whether in Bangladesh's territory or outside it, are governed primarily by

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the National Security Intelligence Ordinance 1975 and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence's enabling legislation, both of which provide relatively broad authority without detailed procedural constraints. The absence of parliamentary oversight and independent judicial authorization requirements for intelligence collection operations, identified as a major institutional gap in Part Nine of this textbook, is particularly significant in the signals intelligence domain given the technically intrusive and potentially broad-based nature of modern signals collection.

CHAPTER NINE: THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES: WHAT BANGLADESH NEEDS AND WHAT IT LACKS

9.1 The Architecture of the Legislative Gap

The technological developments surveyed in the preceding chapters of this Part collectively create a legislative gap in Bangladesh's defense governance framework that is as significant as any of the individual technology challenges they describe. Bangladesh's existing legislative framework for defense and security was designed for a world of conventional military forces, human intelligence operators, kinetic weapons, and physical communications infrastructure. It is not designed for a world of artificial intelligence-assisted targeting decisions, autonomous weapons systems, quantum cryptography, cyber operations at the strategic level, directed energy weapons, and satellite-enabled military operations.

This legislative gap has four principal dimensions. First, there is a definitional gap: Bangladesh's law does not define or classify the new categories of weapons systems and military operations that emerging technologies create, leaving legal decision-makers without the basic conceptual tools to apply existing law to new situations. Second, there is an authorization gap: Bangladesh's law does not clearly authorize the procurement, development, testing, or deployment of autonomous weapons systems, offensive cyber capabilities, or directed energy weapons, leaving defense planners and procurement officials operating in legal uncertainty. Third, there is an oversight gap: Bangladesh's parliamentary and judicial oversight mechanisms for defense and intelligence activities were not designed for the specific oversight challenges that algorithmic decision-making and cyber operations create. Fourth, there is an accountability gap: Bangladesh's law does not provide clear mechanisms for holding individuals, institutions, or the state itself accountable when AI systems or autonomous weapons cause unlawful harm.

Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive legislative reform agenda that is integrated across multiple statutory domains rather than addressed through isolated amendments to existing legislation.

9.2 A Draft Framework: The National Defense Emerging Technologies Act

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The legislative framework proposed here for Bangladesh's governance of emerging defense technologies is built on the foundational principle that technological capability must be matched by legal accountability. The state may develop and deploy new military technologies to protect national security, but only within a framework of law that defines what these technologies are, authorizes their procurement and deployment under specific conditions, establishes meaningful oversight by parliament and the courts, and provides accountability mechanisms when the technologies cause harm.

The proposed National Defense Emerging Technologies Act should contain several key structural elements, which this section develops in some detail.

The first structural element is a definitions framework that provides legally precise definitions for the key categories of emerging military technology. The definitions should follow the international best practices being developed in the CCW discussions and the Tallinn Manual, adapted to Bangladesh's constitutional and legal context. Autonomous weapons systems should be defined by reference to the degree of human control over critical targeting functions, using a tiered framework that distinguishes systems requiring case-by-case human approval of individual engagements from systems in which human control is exercised at the level of operational parameters or rules of engagement rather than individual targeting decisions. Cyber operations should be defined to encompass both defensive operations and potential offensive operations, with the latter subject to more stringent authorization requirements. Artificial intelligence decision support systems used in military and intelligence contexts should be defined and distinguished from systems that make or substantially determine operational decisions.

The second structural element is a tiered authorization framework that establishes different levels of executive authority and parliamentary oversight for different categories of emerging military technology acquisition and deployment. The highest tier, requiring specific parliamentary authorization by simple majority, should cover the development, procurement, or deployment of any autonomous weapons system capable of making lethal targeting decisions without case-by-case human authorization. The rationale for this elevated legislative requirement parallels the rationale for parliamentary authorization of declarations of war: the decision to delegate lethal authority to a machine is a decision of such fundamental constitutional and ethical significance that it should not be made by executive discretion alone.

The middle tier, requiring a ministerial order with mandatory notification to the Defense Committee of Parliament, should cover the deployment of cyber offensive capabilities against foreign targets, the acquisition of directed energy weapons for operational deployment, and the use of AI decision support systems in intelligence analysis where the outputs might be used to support targeting decisions. The notification requirement ensures parliamentary awareness and creates a record that enables retrospective oversight even when the operational security constraints of the activity require advance notice rather than advance authorization.

The lowest tier, subject to standard executive procurement authority with mandatory disclosure in annual defense reports to parliament, should cover the acquisition of military UAV systems, the deployment of AI decision support tools in non-targeting contexts such as logistics and maintenance, and the acquisition of space-based assets. These activities do not raise the same

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

fundamental constitutional concerns as autonomous weapons or offensive cyber operations, but they require transparency to enable informed parliamentary oversight of defense modernization.

The third structural element is a Technology Ethics and Compliance Committee, a statutory body independent of the operational defense establishment, charged with reviewing the ethical and legal compliance of proposed and deployed emerging military technologies. This committee, modeled in part on the Technology Assessment functions of various parliamentary bodies in advanced democracies, should be composed of representatives from the defense establishment, the judiciary, civil society, academia with relevant technical expertise, and parliament. Its functions should include reviewing procurement proposals for emerging military technologies for compliance with the Act's requirements, conducting periodic reviews of deployed systems for continued compliance, and providing public reports to parliament on the ethical and legal compliance of Bangladesh's military technology program.

The accountability framework, the fourth structural element, should establish clear legal liability for harm caused by autonomous weapons systems, AI decision support systems, and cyber operations conducted by or on behalf of the Bangladesh state. The framework should make clear that state accountability for harm caused by autonomous systems does not depend on establishing the individual fault of any specific human decision-maker, recognizing that the distributed and algorithmic nature of these systems can create accountability gaps that traditional negligence and command responsibility doctrines do not adequately address. Bangladesh's own case law on state liability in tort provides a starting point for developing this framework, which should be extended to cover harms resulting from the failure or malfunction of autonomous military systems.

9.3 The Constitutional Dimension: Articles 31, 32, and the Emerging Technology Frontier

The constitutional rights guaranteed by Articles 31 and 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the right to protection of law and the right to life and personal liberty save in accordance with law, provide the supreme legal framework within which any legislation governing emerging military technologies must operate. The constitutional analysis of each category of emerging military technology proposed in this textbook has identified specific constitutional tensions that the proposed legislation must address.

For autonomous weapons systems, the constitutional tension is between the state's legitimate interest in maintaining effective national defense through military modernization and the individual's constitutional right not to be deprived of life except in accordance with law. The "accordance with law" requirement demands that any state-authorized killing be based on a legal framework that is sufficiently precise, foreseeable, and accessible to satisfy the rule of law principle. An autonomous weapons system operating under broad and discretionary rules of engagement may not satisfy this requirement, and the proposed legislation's requirement of specific parliamentary authorization for autonomous lethal systems is designed to ensure that the legal authorization for such systems is deliberate, transparent, and constitutionally adequate.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

For AI decision support systems used in intelligence collection and analysis, the constitutional tension is between Articles 43 and 39, the right to privacy of communications and the right to freedom of thought and expression, and the state's security needs. The constitutional analysis requires that any intelligence collection activity be authorized by law that clearly defines the scope of the authority, establishes procedural safeguards including independent authorization requirements, provides for notification to persons whose communications have been collected when operational security permits, and creates a legal remedy for persons whose constitutional rights have been violated through unlawful collection.

For cyber operations directed at Bangladesh's own citizens and infrastructure in the name of security, the constitutional analysis returns most urgently to the problems identified in Chapter Four of this Part regarding the weaponization of cyber security law for political repression. The constitutional safeguards that must accompany any state cyber surveillance and interdiction authority are the same safeguards that apply to physical surveillance and interdiction: specific legal authorization, independent judicial oversight, proportionality between the measure and the security objective, and effective legal remedies for persons whose rights have been violated.

CHAPTER TEN: TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES

10.1 The Geopolitics of Technology Access

The international landscape of emerging defense technology is not characterized by universal accessibility. The most advanced capabilities in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, autonomous systems, directed energy, and space-based intelligence are concentrated among a small number of technologically advanced states and their corporate defense sectors, and their diffusion to other states is governed by a complex and politically charged regime of export controls, arms transfer regulations, technology transfer agreements, and intelligence-sharing arrangements.

For Bangladesh, the geopolitics of technology access is a critical determinant of what is achievable in its defense modernization program. Bangladesh's existing defense technology relationships create both opportunities and constraints. The relationship with China provides access to a broad range of military platforms and some technology transfer possibilities, but China's most advanced military technology, including its most sophisticated AI systems, quantum communications infrastructure, and autonomous weapons, is not available for transfer to foreign states including partners like Bangladesh. The relationship with Turkey provides access to some innovative and combat-proven systems, including drone technology and air defense systems, and Turkey's defense industry has shown greater openness to technology transfer and licensed production arrangements than China. The growing interest in Western defense partnerships, particularly through the relationship with the United States that has been developing cautiously since the interim government of 2024, opens potential access to some

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

American-aligned technology ecosystems including NATO-standard communications systems and potentially some elements of the American military AI ecosystem.

The international intellectual property regime, centered on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement and a network of bilateral investment treaties, establishes the legal framework within which technology transfer for defense purposes must operate. Defense technology transfer agreements typically involve complex arrangements balancing the supplier's interest in protecting proprietary technology against the recipient's interest in genuine capability acquisition that includes the knowledge to maintain, modify, and eventually reproduce the technology. Bangladesh's experience with its existing defense acquisitions suggests that the technology transfer provisions of defense contracts have often been inadequate, resulting in excessive dependence on supplier-country maintenance and support that undermines the very strategic autonomy that acquisition was intended to enhance.

10.2 Building an Emerging Technology Research Ecosystem

The long-term solution to Bangladesh's technology access challenge is the gradual development of an indigenous emerging technology research ecosystem that can both absorb and adapt foreign technology and develop genuinely indigenous capabilities in selected domains. This is not a counsel for autarky: no state in the modern world develops all its military technology independently, and the specialization and international division of labor that characterizes the global defense technology ecosystem is rational and efficient. The goal is rather to develop sufficient indigenous research and development capability that Bangladesh can be a meaningful participant in international technology partnerships rather than a passive recipient of foreign systems.

The foundation for this indigenous research ecosystem already exists in embryonic form. Bangladesh's universities, led by BUET, have developed significant research capacity in several technology domains relevant to defense applications, including information technology, communications engineering, materials science, and aeronautical engineering. The Bangladesh Ordnance Factories, documented in Part Ten of this textbook, have production capabilities that could be expanded toward higher-technology products given appropriate investment and institutional development. The Bangladesh Computer Council and the ICT Division have developed a civilian technology infrastructure that, with appropriate extension, could support selected military applications.

The specific emerging technology domains in which Bangladesh should prioritize indigenous research investment, in the view of this analysis, are artificial intelligence applications for defense intelligence and logistics, cyber defense capabilities, and unmanned aerial vehicle development. These three domains share several characteristics that make them well-suited for Bangladesh's indigenous development: they do not require the massive industrial base that major kinetic weapons systems demand, they are accessible through the adaptation and development of commercially available technology, they align with Bangladesh's existing technology base in software and electronics, and they provide the most significant returns relative to investment in Bangladesh's specific security environment.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER ELEVEN: INFORMATION WARFARE, DISINFORMATION, AND THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF DEFENSE

11.1 The Cognitive Domain as a Military Battlespace

The oldest and most fundamental dimension of warfare is cognitive: the effort to shape the perceptions, beliefs, and decisions of adversaries, neutrals, and one's own population in ways that serve strategic objectives. From the ancient use of psychological intimidation tactics, through Clausewitz's recognition that war is ultimately a contest of will, to the contemporary concept of information operations, military planners have always understood that what people believe about a conflict can be as consequential as what armies do on the battlefield.

What has changed in the digital age is the scale, speed, and accessibility of information operations. The global internet and social media platforms provide instruments for the instantaneous mass dissemination of information, disinformation, and propaganda at costs that are a tiny fraction of traditional mass media operations. Sophisticated disinformation campaigns that previously required the resources of major intelligence establishments can now be conducted by relatively small teams using commercially available tools. And the polarized, algorithmically amplified information environment of major social media platforms creates conditions where false and emotionally provocative content spreads faster and further than accurate but less emotionally engaging corrections.

The concept of cognitive warfare, which has entered strategic discourse as a refinement and extension of information warfare, focuses specifically on the effort to influence the mental processes, perceptions, and decision-making of adversaries at all levels from individual leaders to mass populations. Russian information operations in Ukraine, Belarus, and across the European Union, Chinese information operations in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and among diaspora communities globally, and the information operations of various other state and non-state actors have demonstrated that cognitive warfare can achieve significant strategic effects at relatively low cost and with considerable deniability.

11.2 Bangladesh's Cognitive Vulnerability

Bangladesh's information environment makes it particularly vulnerable to external cognitive warfare operations. The characteristics that create this vulnerability include a highly politicized media landscape in which partisan narratives are deeply embedded, a social media ecosystem in which false or misleading content spreads very rapidly particularly in Bengali-language communities, a history of politically motivated disinformation that has normalized the manipulation of information in domestic political discourse, and active foreign actors with both the motivation and the capability to conduct information operations targeting Bangladesh's political stability.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

India, China, and Pakistan all have active information operation capabilities that have been deployed in various contexts in the region. India's concerns about Bangladesh's potential strategic re-alignment under the post-2024 interim government, including the reported cooling of the warm India-Bangladesh relationship of the Hasina years and the warming of Bangladesh-Pakistan relations, create potential motivations for Indian information operations seeking to influence Bangladeshi political dynamics. China's interest in maintaining Bangladesh as a receptive environment for its Belt and Road investments and its military sales creates motivations for information operations that promote pro-Chinese narratives and discredit critics of Chinese engagement in Bangladesh. Pakistan's interest in deepening its newly warming relationship with Bangladesh creates potential for information operations targeting anti-Pakistan sentiment in Bangladesh's public discourse.

The Rohingya refugee crisis creates a specific information warfare vulnerability for Bangladesh. The enormous Rohingya refugee population in Cox's Bazar District, now numbering over a million people, is a potential target for information operations by Myanmar, which seeks to prevent international pressure for Rohingya repatriation and may seek to exacerbate tensions within Bangladesh, and by various political forces within Bangladesh that seek to use the Rohingya issue for domestic political purposes. Social media disinformation targeting the Rohingya community and about the Rohingya community has already generated significant social tension and violence in Bangladesh's southeast.

11.3 Counter-Disinformation Architecture and Legal Framework

The institutional and legislative response to information warfare and cognitive threats requires a careful balance that this textbook has emphasized repeatedly: protecting national security and social cohesion against genuine disinformation threats while preserving the constitutional guarantees of free expression that are both intrinsically valuable and practically important as conditions of democratic governance.

The constitutional framework, as analyzed earlier in this Part, requires that any state intervention in the information domain be based on law that is precise, proportionate, and subject to independent oversight. The experience of the Digital Security Act 2018 demonstrates the dangers of overly broad cyber and information security legislation: a law intended to protect against disinformation and information security threats became an instrument for suppressing legitimate political speech, journalistic inquiry, and civil society advocacy, with devastating effects on Bangladesh's democratic culture and international reputation.

The counter-disinformation legislative framework that Bangladesh requires should be structured around a distinction between three categories of harmful information content. The first category, which warrants criminal sanction, includes deliberately fabricated content designed to incite ethnic or religious violence, content that falsely represents official government statements or actions in ways that could cause public disorder, and foreign-state-directed disinformation campaigns coordinated through paid networks. These represent genuine security threats that justify state intervention with appropriate procedural safeguards.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The second category, which warrants regulatory rather than criminal response, includes systematically misleading content that creates demonstrable public harm but does not meet the threshold for criminal sanction, including the amplification of false narratives about public health, electoral processes, or security situations. The regulatory response should focus on transparency requirements for platform operators rather than direct content suppression, requiring platforms to label content identified as potentially misleading, to disclose advertising from foreign state actors, and to provide data to independent researchers studying information operations.

The third category, which includes all political speech, criticism of government, and controversial opinion, must be protected from state interference even when offensive or incorrect, subject only to the narrowest constitutional exceptions for speech that directly incites imminent violence. This protection is not merely a concession to liberal democratic norms but a practical strategic necessity: a state that suppresses political dissent in the name of countering disinformation creates the political conditions in which genuine security threats thrive because the information environment is so polluted with state-managed narratives that citizens cannot distinguish genuine security information from political manipulation.

CHAPTER TWELVE: DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE DUAL-USE PROBLEM AND EXPORT CONTROLS

12.1 The Dual-Use Technology Challenge

Many of the most strategically significant emerging technologies in the defense domain are inherently dual-use: their underlying technical capabilities can be applied to both military and civilian purposes, and often to both beneficial and harmful civilian purposes. Artificial intelligence systems designed for military surveillance can be deployed for mass civilian surveillance of political dissidents. Cyber capabilities developed for military electronic warfare can be turned against civilian infrastructure. Biometric recognition systems designed for border security can be deployed as instruments of political repression. This dual-use character creates profound challenges for both domestic technology governance and international technology transfer regimes.

The international export control regime, centered on the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies and several commodity-specific regimes including the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime, attempts to prevent the transfer of dual-use technologies to states that might use them for purposes contrary to international security. The Wassenaar Arrangement, which includes 42 participating states primarily from the advanced industrialized world, maintains control lists of military and dual-use items that participating states agree to license for export and to exchange information about export decisions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh is not a participating state in the Wassenaar Arrangement. This means that Bangladesh is neither subject to the Arrangement's export controls on its own exports nor entitled to benefit from the presumptions of legitimacy that Arrangement membership creates for other states considering whether to export controlled technologies to Bangladesh. As Bangladesh develops its own defense technology capabilities and potentially its own limited defense export market, the question of how Bangladesh manages the dual-use technology problem, and whether it should seek association with international export control regimes, will become increasingly significant.

12.2 Bangladesh as a Potential Technology Exporter

The vision for Bangladesh's defense industrial development articulated in Part Ten of this textbook, if successfully realized, will eventually create Bangladesh defense products that may be attractive to other developing-country markets. Bangladesh's UAV systems, if developed successfully, might find export markets among similar-capacity states in South Asia and Africa. Bangladesh's ammunition and explosives production, which already exceeds domestic requirements in some categories, could support a modest export market. And Bangladesh's increasingly sophisticated naval construction capability could support regional demand for patrol vessels and offshore security vessels.

Any defense export program requires a domestic legal framework governing what Bangladesh will and will not export, to whom, and under what conditions. This framework must reflect Bangladesh's international obligations including those under the UN Arms Trade Treaty, which Bangladesh has signed though not yet ratified, as well as Bangladesh's own strategic and human rights values. The Arms Trade Treaty requires states parties to assess whether exported arms might be used for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, or serious violations of international human rights law, and to refuse transfers where there is an overriding risk of such use.

The development of a Bangladesh Arms Export Control Act, drawing on the Arms Trade Treaty framework and the more developed national implementation legislation of states with established defense export programs, should be part of the broader legislative reform agenda. This Act should establish a National Arms Transfer Control Committee responsible for reviewing all defense export proposals, applying criteria consistent with the Arms Trade Treaty and Bangladesh's other international obligations, maintaining a public register of approved defense export licenses, and reporting annually to parliament on Bangladesh's defense export activities.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE ACCOUNTABILITY IMPERATIVE

13.1 How Technology Changes the Civil-Military Balance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The relationship between civilian political authority and military institutional power, analyzed in depth in Part Five of this textbook, is directly affected by the introduction of emerging military technologies in ways that require careful analysis. Several of the technologies discussed in this Part tend to concentrate operational capability and information in ways that could, if ungoverned, shift the civil-military balance in directions unfavorable to democratic accountability.

Artificial intelligence decision support systems used within the military establishment produce intelligence assessments, operational plans, and capability analyses that may be technically incomprehensible to civilian political decision-makers who lack the technical background to evaluate them. If civilian oversight of military operations comes to depend on accepting AI-generated assessments that the civilian authorities cannot independently verify or interrogate, the practical basis for meaningful civilian control is significantly eroded. The information advantage that comes with technical sophistication is a form of power, and when that power is concentrated within the military establishment and opaque to civilian oversight institutions, it creates structural conditions for the kind of "expert capture" of security policy that undermines democratic accountability.

Cyber offensive capabilities present a similar but more acute problem. The operational logic of offensive cyber operations often requires secrecy, speed, and deniability that conflicts with the requirements of democratic authorization and accountability. The temptation for military and intelligence establishments operating in the cyber domain is to treat cyber operations as technical activities not requiring the same level of civilian authorization that conventional military operations require, on the grounds that they do not involve kinetic force and are therefore categorically different from acts of war. This logic, if accepted, would effectively remove a significant and growing category of state coercive action from the framework of democratic authorization and oversight.

Autonomous weapons systems present perhaps the most acute civil-military challenge because their deployment involves a delegation of lethal authority to a system that operates faster than any human oversight mechanism can realistically monitor. A military establishment that has acquired and deployed autonomous weapons systems has, in operational terms, pre-decided a significant range of lethal engagements without the case-by-case civilian authorization that the constitutional principle of civilian control of the military implies.

13.2 The Parliamentary Technology Oversight Function

The Bangladesh parliament's defense oversight function, analyzed in Part Five of this textbook as a critical but underdeveloped institution, requires significant enhancement to meet the specific challenges of emerging military technologies. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense, which has the statutory mandate to review defense policy and expenditure, lacks the technical expertise and the access to classified information necessary for genuinely informed oversight of the emerging technology dimensions of Bangladesh's defense program.

The model of specialized parliamentary science and technology advisory committees, which several European parliaments have developed, provides a potential template for Bangladesh. A Parliamentary Committee on Defense Technology and Intelligence, staffed by technically trained

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

advisers with appropriate security clearances, and with statutory access to classified defense technology assessments, AI system audits, and cyber operations reports, would provide the foundation for genuinely informed parliamentary oversight of these critical areas.

The committee's mandate should explicitly include reviewing all proposed procurement of autonomous weapons systems and offensive cyber capabilities against the criteria established in the proposed National Defense Emerging Technologies Act, examining the ethical compliance assessments of deployed AI systems, and providing an annual public report to parliament on Bangladesh's emerging technology defense program that is appropriately redacted for operational security but substantively informative.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: REGIONAL DIMENSIONS: SOUTH ASIAN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY COMPETITION AND BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION

14.1 India's Military Technology Modernization and the Bangladesh Implications

India's military technology modernization program, which has accelerated substantially since the Modi government took office in 2014, is the most significant regional development affecting Bangladesh's emerging technology strategic environment. India has established the Defence Artificial Intelligence Council and the Defence AI Project Agency, has designated 75 defense AI priority projects, has established the Indian Army AI Incubation Center, and has launched naval vessels with integrated AI capabilities. The Indian government intends to leverage the private sector's sizable AI workforce and dual-use technologies for defense, and the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force have each set aside annual allocations for the development of AI-specific applications, with swarm drone systems already introduced by the Mechanised Infantry Regiment for operations close to the Line of Actual Control. Wikipedia

India's quantum computing program is also advancing rapidly, with the Department of Science and Technology leading a National Mission on Quantum Technologies with an 8,000-crore-rupee budget over five years. India's primary quantum computing concern is China's advanced quantum program, but India's quantum capabilities also affect the Bangladesh strategic environment, particularly in the domain of quantum-enabled signals intelligence collection that India's Research and Analysis Wing has historically directed at Bangladesh.

The implications for Bangladesh of India's accelerating military technology modernization are twofold. In the near term, the growing technological gap between India's military capabilities and Bangladesh's creates an increasing asymmetry that reinforces Bangladesh's strategic dependence. In the medium term, however, India's technology development also creates opportunities: India's defense technology ecosystem is increasingly integrated with a broader South Asian technology

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

ecosystem in which Bangladesh participates, and selective technology cooperation with India in domains of mutual interest could provide Bangladesh with access to Indian-developed capabilities at terms potentially more favorable than acquisition from more distant suppliers.

The geopolitical constraint on India-Bangladesh defense technology cooperation, which is substantial, is the same geopolitical constraint identified throughout this textbook on the India-Bangladesh defense relationship generally: India's interest in Bangladesh's strategic alignment conflicts with Bangladesh's interest in maintaining the strategic autonomy that requires hedging India's dominance by maintaining significant defense relationships with China and Turkey. The challenge for Bangladesh's diplomacy is to explore technology cooperation opportunities with India without foreclosing its other technology access relationships, a balance that requires sophisticated management of all three simultaneously.

14.2 China's Military Technology Presence in Bangladesh

China's position as Bangladesh's principal arms supplier gives China a significant structural presence in Bangladesh's military technology ecosystem that the introduction of emerging technologies will deepen rather than diminish. Chinese-origin platforms in Bangladesh's inventory, including submarines, frigates, corvettes, fighter aircraft, main battle tanks, and air defense systems, all increasingly incorporate Chinese-developed AI and electronic systems. As Bangladesh operates these platforms and as they receive software updates and capability enhancements, the Chinese technological penetration of Bangladesh's military system grows.

The most important strategic question for Bangladesh's emerging technology planners is the extent to which Chinese-origin military technology systems contain capabilities or vulnerabilities that China's military and intelligence establishment could exploit. This is not merely theoretical speculation: the United States has documented numerous cases of Chinese military and intelligence technology containing backdoors and undisclosed capabilities, and has on these grounds prohibited or restricted the procurement of Chinese telecommunications technology, Chinese drones, and Chinese software by US governmental entities.

Bangladesh's capacity to conduct meaningful technical security audits of Chinese-origin military systems is limited by the same technical expertise and resource constraints that limit its capacity in other emerging technology domains. Developing this capacity through a dedicated Technical Security Evaluation capability within Bangladesh's defense research and development establishment, potentially in cooperation with trusted technology partners who have the necessary expertise and who share Bangladesh's interest in understanding and mitigating Chinese technology risks, should be a priority element of Bangladesh's emerging technology governance agenda.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: TOWARD A BANGLADESH EMERGING TECHNOLOGY DEFENSE DOCTRINE: SYNTHESIS AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

15.1 The Principles of Bangladesh's Emerging Technology Defense Doctrine

The analysis developed across the preceding fourteen chapters of this Part provides the foundation for articulating the core principles of Bangladesh's emerging technology defense doctrine. These principles are not a substitute for the detailed operational and procurement planning that must follow them, but they provide the strategic and ethical framework within which that planning should occur.

The first principle is technology as sovereignty enhancer, not sovereignty compromiser. Every emerging technology decision Bangladesh makes must be evaluated not only by its operational military value but by its effect on Bangladesh's strategic autonomy. Technologies that create excessive dependence on single suppliers, that introduce opaque capabilities Bangladesh cannot understand or control, or that commit Bangladesh to interoperability arrangements that constrain its freedom of action must be assessed with the same caution that Part Ten of this textbook applied to the defense industrial dependency question.

The second principle is meaningful human control over lethal force. Bangladesh's constitutional framework and its international humanitarian law obligations both require that decisions to employ lethal force be made by human beings exercising genuine moral and legal judgment, not delegated to algorithms. Bangladesh should implement this principle in its procurement standards, its operational doctrine, and its position in international forums on autonomous weapons.

The third principle is cyber sovereignty with constitutional protection. Bangladesh must develop its cyber defense capabilities vigorously, but within a constitutional framework that protects the fundamental rights of Bangladeshi citizens. The cyber domain must not become a space of ungoverned state power where constitutional safeguards do not apply.

The fourth principle is transparent democratic oversight. Every new military technology Bangladesh acquires or develops must be subject to genuine parliamentary oversight, with the institutional infrastructure and the access to classified information necessary for that oversight to be genuinely informed rather than merely formal.

The fifth principle is international legal leadership. Bangladesh should be an active, principled, and engaged participant in international discussions about the governance of emerging military technologies, not a passive follower of whatever major powers agree to or fail to agree on. Bangladesh's interests, its constitutional values, and its identity as a champion of international law and the rights of smaller states all support a posture of active international engagement.

15.2 Draft Policy Framework: The Bangladesh Emerging Technologies Defense Policy Statement

Building on the preceding analysis, this section sets out a draft Bangladesh Emerging Technologies Defense Policy Statement that could serve as the foundational policy document for Bangladesh's governance of these issues. It is offered as a model for the kind of policy

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

framework Bangladesh's defense establishment and parliament should develop, recognizing that the specific provisions would require extensive consultation and refinement.

Bangladesh's Emerging Technologies Defense Policy should affirm that Bangladesh embraces the opportunities that emerging technologies offer to enhance national defense, but insists that these opportunities must be pursued within a framework of constitutional law, international humanitarian law, human rights, and democratic accountability that reflects Bangladesh's values and its obligations as a responsible member of the international community.

On artificial intelligence, Bangladesh's policy should commit to deploying AI systems in military and intelligence contexts only where their outputs are subject to meaningful human review before any lethal or significantly rights-affecting action, where the systems' performance has been independently validated in conditions comparable to their operational deployment environment, where robust accountability mechanisms exist for harm caused by system errors, and where civilian parliamentary oversight of AI system procurement and deployment is exercised through the statutory mechanisms established in the National Defense Emerging Technologies Act.

On autonomous weapons systems, Bangladesh's policy should commit to maintaining meaningful human control over all targeting decisions involving lethal force, opposing fully autonomous lethal systems that operate without human authorization of individual engagements, advocating for an international legally binding instrument governing autonomous weapons, and developing national legislation that implements these commitments with enforceable legal standards.

On cyber operations, Bangladesh's policy should commit to developing robust cyber defense capabilities to protect Bangladesh's national security, establishing clear legal authority for defensive cyber operations and for proportionate countermeasures against documented hostile cyber operations, subjecting any offensive cyber operations to ministerial authorization and parliamentary notification, and maintaining Bangladesh's international obligations not to facilitate cyber operations against third states.

On quantum technologies, Bangladesh's policy should commit to urgently initiating the migration of critical military and governmental communications infrastructure to quantum-resistant encryption standards, establishing a National Cryptographic Office to manage the ongoing cryptographic modernization challenge, and participating actively in international scientific and diplomatic exchanges on quantum technology governance.

On space-based assets, Bangladesh's policy should commit to developing Bangladesh's space-based intelligence and communications capabilities in ways that enhance strategic autonomy rather than create new dependencies, supporting international diplomatic efforts to develop responsible norms of behavior in the space domain, and ensuring that Bangladesh's space assets are sufficiently protected through redundancy and backup systems to remain operational in scenarios of deliberate or accidental interference.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: BANGLADESH'S PHILOSOPHICAL HERITAGE AND THE ETHICS OF EMERGING DEFENSE TECHNOLOGIES

16.1 Drawing on Bangladesh's Own Philosophical and Ethical Traditions

This textbook has throughout drawn on Western philosophical and legal traditions to illuminate the ethical and jurisprudential dimensions of Bangladesh's defense policy challenges. This final chapter of Part Eleven argues that Bangladesh also possesses, in its own cultural, religious, and literary heritage, philosophical resources that are directly relevant to the ethical challenges posed by emerging military technologies.

The Bengali intellectual tradition, rooted in the literature and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, the educational vision of Begum Rokeya, the political philosophy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's liberation movement, and the democratic aspirations of successive generations of Bangladeshi citizens, offers a humanistic ethical framework that is relevant to the questions about artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, and the relationship between technology and human dignity that this Part has examined.

Tagore's philosophical vision, articulated in his lectures and essays on nationalism, civilization, and the human spirit, was deeply skeptical of the claim that technological progress constitutes civilizational progress when divorced from the moral development of human beings. His critique of Western nationalism and industrial civilization in Nationalism, published in 1917, was not a rejection of modernity but a demand that modernity be measured by human flourishing rather than mechanical efficiency. Applied to the question of autonomous weapons, Tagore's philosophical framework would ask not whether an AI targeting system is more efficient than a human soldier but whether the substitution of machine judgment for human moral responsibility in the act of killing represents a degradation of the human spirit that no military efficiency gain can compensate.

The Islamic philosophical tradition that is central to the cultural heritage of most Bangladeshis also has relevant resources for the ethics of emerging military technology. Islamic jurisprudence's tradition of public interest reasoning, the concept of maslaha or the welfare of the community, provides a framework for evaluating military technologies not merely by their military utility but by their broader impact on human welfare and Islamic ethical norms. The principle of avoiding harm, la darar wa la dirar in the hadith tradition, requires that military means not cause disproportionate harm to non-combatants, a requirement that maps directly onto the international humanitarian law principles of distinction and proportionality. And Islamic jurisprudence's tradition of responsible delegation and accountability, embodied in the concept of amanah or trust, implies that authority over lethal force cannot be delegated to a system incapable of moral accountability.

16.2 The Jurisprudence of Emerging Military Technologies: Toward a Bangladeshi Contribution

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's legal tradition, informed by both the common law heritage of British colonial administration and the constitutional jurisprudence that Bangladesh's Supreme Court has developed since independence, is well-positioned to make original and significant contributions to the international jurisprudential debate about emerging military technologies.

The Bangladesh Supreme Court's extensive jurisprudence on fundamental rights, developed across more than five decades of constitutional adjudication, provides the domestic foundation. The court's interpretation of the right to life in Article 32, its development of the doctrine of constitutional review of executive action, its articulation of the principles of legitimate expectation and natural justice in administrative law, and its more recent engagement with the constitutional dimensions of digital rights and cyber security all provide relevant jurisprudential building blocks.

The most significant potential Bangladeshi contribution to the international jurisprudence of emerging military technologies lies in the intersection of three jurisprudential strands that are uniquely prominent in Bangladesh's legal history: the jurisprudence of accountability for mass atrocity developed through the International Crimes Tribunals, the jurisprudence of constitutional rights protection in conditions of security threat developed through the Supreme Court's habeas corpus and fundamental rights jurisdiction, and the emerging jurisprudence of digital rights and cyber security developed in response to the Digital Security Act litigation.

Each of these strands addresses a dimension of the accountability, rights protection, and security governance challenges that emerging military technologies create. Bangladesh's courts, its legislature, and its academic legal community have the intellectual resources to develop an original and authoritative contribution to the global jurisprudential debate, drawing on both Bangladesh's unique legal history and the universal values embedded in its constitutional framework.

CONCLUSION TO PART ELEVEN: TECHNOLOGY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE FUTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE POLICY

The analysis developed across sixteen chapters of Part Eleven arrives at a conclusion that is simultaneously technical, strategic, philosophical, and constitutional: the emerging technology revolution in military affairs is not merely a challenge to Bangladesh's defense planning but a test of Bangladesh's commitment to its own values and its own constitutional identity.

A Bangladesh that deploys artificial intelligence and autonomous systems without meaningful human control violates the constitutional right to life through process and the international humanitarian law obligations that its history of fighting for its own liberation taught it to respect. A Bangladesh that develops cyber capabilities without constitutional safeguards replicates the very authoritarian logic of digitally enabled repression that its people rejected in the July Revolution of 2024 and in every preceding democratic uprising. A Bangladesh that becomes

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

technologically dependent on single external suppliers for the most critical elements of its digital military infrastructure has not genuinely achieved the strategic autonomy that its Forces Goal 2030 seeks.

The path that Part Eleven charts is demanding but achievable. It requires institutional reform to create the oversight bodies and technical capabilities that genuine governance of emerging technologies demands. It requires legislative reform to establish the legal framework that neither the existing statutory architecture nor the Constitution's silences currently provide. It requires diplomatic engagement to shape the international norms that will govern the technologies whose most dangerous forms only collective international action can prevent. And it requires intellectual investment in the philosophical and jurisprudential frameworks that can make Bangladesh not merely a follower of standards set by others but a genuine contributor to the global conversation about how humanity governs the most consequential technologies it has ever created.

The liberation of 1971 was fought by people who believed that sovereignty meant not merely formal independence but the genuine capacity to determine one's own fate. In the domain of emerging defense technologies, sovereignty means the capacity to make independent and principled choices about the technologies that will shape Bangladesh's security, not merely the capacity to purchase whatever others design and sell. Building that genuine technological sovereignty is one of the great strategic challenges of Bangladesh's next generation, and it is a challenge that this textbook submits is worthy of the same commitment and intelligence that Bangladesh's people have brought to every great challenge since independence.

Part Twelve will address Bangladesh's defense policy in the context of international peacekeeping: the institutional history of Bangladesh's extraordinary contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, the strategic value and the strategic costs of that contribution, the specific legal and operational frameworks that govern Bangladesh's peacekeeping activities, the emerging challenges of peacekeeping in an era of great power competition and sophisticated information warfare, and the reforms needed to ensure that Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution remains operationally effective, legally compliant, and strategically purposeful in the decades ahead.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART ELEVEN

Artificial Intelligence and Military Operations: Foundational Works

Russell, Stuart and Peter Norvig. Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach. Fourth edition. Hoboken: Pearson, 2020.

Scharre, Paul. Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War. New York: W.W. Norton, 2018.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Johnson, James. Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021.

Allen, Gregory and Taniel Chan. Artificial Intelligence and National Security. Cambridge: Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center, 2017.

Roff, Heather. Machine Learning: The New Dog of War. Washington: Georgetown Security Studies, 2015.

Cummings, Mary. "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare." Chatham House Research Paper. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2017.

Brundage, Miles et al. The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence: Forecasting, Prevention, and Mitigation. arXiv, 2018.

Horowitz, Michael. The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Docherty, Bonnie. Losing Humanity: The Case Against Killer Robots. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2012.

Autonomous Weapons: International Law and Ethics

International Committee of the Red Cross. Autonomous Weapons Systems: Implications of Increasing Autonomy in the Critical Functions of Weapons. Geneva: ICRC, 2023.

International Committee of the Red Cross. Ethics and Autonomous Weapons: Perspectives from Different Disciplines. Geneva: ICRC, 2021.

Heyns, Christof. Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. UN Document A/HRC/23/47. Geneva: UN Human Rights Council, 2013.

Arkin, Ronald. Governing Lethal Behavior in Autonomous Robots. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2009.

Sparrow, Robert. "Killer Robots." Journal of Applied Philosophy, Volume 24, Number 1, 2007.

Roff, Heather. "The Strategic Robot Problem: Lethal Autonomous Weapons in War." Journal of Military Ethics, Volume 13, Number 3, 2014.

Human Rights Watch and IHRC. Shaking the Foundations: The Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2014.

CCW Group of Governmental Experts. Report of the 2023 Session of the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. Geneva: UN CCW, 2023.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Modirzadeh, Naz, Dustin Lewis, and Emmeline Reeves. "Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under International Law." American Society of International Law Insights, Volume 29, Number 1, 2024.

Quantum Computing and Cryptography

Preskill, John. "Quantum Computing in the NISQ Era and Beyond." Quantum, Volume 2, 2018.

Bernstein, Daniel and Tanja Lange. "Post-Quantum Cryptography." Nature, Volume 549, 2017.

National Institute of Standards and Technology. Post-Quantum Cryptographic Standards. NIST Special Publication 800-208. Washington: NIST, 2024.

Chen, Lily et al. Report on Post-Quantum Cryptography. NISTIR 8105. Gaithersburg: NIST, 2016.

Gisin, Nicolas et al. "Quantum Cryptography." Reviews of Modern Physics, Volume 74, 2002.

Kop, Mauritz. "Quantum Technology Law: Legal Challenges Ahead." Stanford CodeX Center for Legal Informatics, 2021.

Jaeger, Gregg. Quantum Information: An Overview. New York: Springer, 2007.

Cyber Warfare and International Law

Schmitt, Michael, ed. Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Rid, Thomas. Cyber War Will Not Take Place. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Kello, Lucas. The Virtual Weapon and International Order. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Libicki, Martin. Cyberdeterrence and Cyberwar. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009.

Singer, Peter and Allan Friedman. Cybersecurity and Cyberwar: What Everyone Needs to Know. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Brown, Gary and Keira Poellet. "The Customary International Law of Cyberspace." Strategic Studies Quarterly, Volume 6, Number 3, 2012.

Tsagourias, Nicholas. "Cyber Attacks, Self-Defence and the Problem of Attribution." Journal of Conflict and Security Law, Volume 17, Number 2, 2012.

Bangladesh Computer Council. National Cybersecurity Strategy: Bangladesh 2021-2025. Dhaka: BCC, 2021.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Directed Energy Weapons

Beason, Douglas. The E-Bomb: How America's New Directed Energy Weapons Will Change the Way Future Wars Will Be Fought. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2005.

Shulman, Mark. "Discrimination in the Laws of Information Warfare." Columbia Journal of Transnational Law, Volume 37, 1999.

Stupl, Jan and Goetz Neuneck. "Assessment of Long Range High Power Laser Weapon Concepts." Acta Astronautica, Volume 58, 2006.

Protocol IV to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons: Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons. Geneva: UN, 1995.

Space Security and International Law

Johnson-Freese, Joan. Space Warfare in the 21st Century: Arming the Heavens. London: Routledge, 2017.

Steer, Cassandra. "Why Outer Space Matters for National and International Security." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, Volume 18, 2017.

Outer Space Treaty. Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space. UN Treaty Series, Volume 610. New York: UN, 1967.

Cheng, Bin. Studies in International Space Law. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

Lyall, Francis and Paul Larsen. Space Law: A Treatise. Second edition. London: Routledge, 2018.

Drone Warfare

Boyle, Michael. "The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare." International Affairs, Volume 89, Number 1, 2013.

Hajjar, Lisa. "The Counterterrorism War Paradigm versus International Humanitarian Law: The Legal Contradictions and Global Consequences of the US Drone Program." Law and Social Inquiry, Volume 44, Number 4, 2019.

International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic. Living Under Drones. Stanford: Stanford Law School, 2012.

Zenko, Micah. Reforming U.S. Drone Strike Policies. Council on Foreign Relations Special Report Number 65. New York: CFR, 2013.

Information Warfare and Cognitive Warfare

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Singer, Peter and Emerson Brooking. LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018.

Rid, Thomas and Thomas Hecker. "Propaganda and Intelligence." Journal of Strategic Studies, Volume 32, Number 1, 2009.

Pomerantsev, Peter. This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality. New York: PublicAffairs, 2019.

Mazarr, Michael et al. Hostile Social Manipulation: Present Realities and Emerging Trends. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2019.

Bangladesh Specific Sources

Bangladesh ICT Division. Draft National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence of Bangladesh. Version 3.0. Dhaka: ICT Division, 2024.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. Cyber Security Framework for Telecommunications Sector. Dhaka: BTRC, 2023.

Controller of Certifying Authorities Bangladesh. National Public Key Infrastructure Policy. Dhaka: CIRT, 2022.

BGD e-GOV CIRT. Bangladesh Cybersecurity Annual Report. Dhaka: BGD e-GOV CIRT, 2025.

"AI Cyberwarfare Has Outgrown Deterrence: Why US National Defense Doctrine Must Change." The Sylhet Times. April 2026.

Contemporary Global Policy Documents

United Nations Secretary-General. New Agenda for Peace. New York: UN, 2023.

United Nations General Assembly. Resolution on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems. A/RES/78/241. New York: UN General Assembly, December 2023.

United Nations General Assembly First Committee. Resolution on Negotiation of Legally Binding LAWS Agreement. New York: UN, November 2025.

US Department of Defense. DoD Directive 3000.09: Autonomy in Weapon Systems. Updated. Washington: DoD, 2023.

US Department of Defense. Responsible Artificial Intelligence Strategy and Implementation Pathway. Washington: DoD, 2022.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

NIST. Federal Information Processing Standards Publication 203, 204, 205: Post-Quantum Cryptographic Algorithms. Gaithersburg: NIST, August 2024.

End of Part Eleven

Part Twelve will address Bangladesh's extraordinary contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations: the historical development of Bangladesh's peacekeeping identity from its first deployment in 1988 through its current status as consistently one of the largest troop-contributing countries in the world, the strategic value and the strategic costs of this contribution, the specific legal and operational frameworks governing Bangladesh's peacekeeping activities under both international law and domestic constitutional and statutory law, the emerging challenges of peacekeeping in an era of great power competition and information warfare, the specific issues of accountability for peacekeeping-related misconduct including the serious allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that have tarnished the reputation of UN peacekeeping generally, and the institutional and legislative reforms needed to ensure that Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution remains operationally effective, legally compliant, ethically sound, and strategically purposeful in the complex security environment of the twenty-first century.

PART TWELVE: BANGLADESH AND UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING: HISTORY, STRATEGY, LAW, GENDER, MISCONDUCT, CRISIS, AND THE FUTURE OF THE BLUE HELMET

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART TWELVE

There is no domain of Bangladesh's defense and foreign policy that is simultaneously more celebrated and more controversially contested, more economically consequential and more ethically complex, more deeply woven into national identity and more structurally vulnerable to forces beyond Bangladesh's control than its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. For over three and a half decades, the blue helmet has been one of the most visible and most meaningful symbols of Bangladesh's presence in the world. The flag of Bangladesh has flown above bases and forward operating posts in some of the most dangerous and most forgotten corners of the globe, from the jungles of the Central African Republic to the dry scrublands of Abyei, from the shattered cities of the Democratic Republic of Congo to the tense hills of the Golan Heights. Bangladeshi soldiers, police, pilots, engineers, and medical personnel have paid with their lives for this commitment: as of 2025, 168 Bangladeshis have died in the service of the United Nations, and at least 257 more have been wounded.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The intellectual and policy analysis that this Part undertakes is not an exercise in applause for this record, though the record has elements that genuinely deserve applause. It is an exercise in rigorous examination: of the historical and strategic logic that drove Bangladesh into peacekeeping, of the legal framework that governs and constrains Bangladesh's peacekeeping activities, of the economic dimensions that both incentivize the contribution and generate uncomfortable questions about motivations, of the serious and persistently unresolved problems of misconduct that have damaged the UN's peacekeeping credibility and Bangladesh's reputation within it, of the political crisis of multilateralism that threatens to shrink peacekeeping dramatically just as Bangladesh has built an extraordinary institutional investment in it, and of the reforms necessary to ensure that Bangladesh's peacekeeping identity remains both genuinely effective and constitutionally legitimate.

The moment is urgent. Last year was a challenging one for UN peacekeeping. The UN faced a serious liquidity crisis that affected the operational capacity and effectiveness of field missions, the result of member states being unwilling or unable to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. The US, apportioned to pay 27 percent of the assessed peacekeeping budget, indicated it would entirely forego its contribution in its 2026 fiscal year. Security Council Report For Bangladesh, almost 1,400 Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed in various UN missions will be sent home by mid-2026 due to severe fund cuts by donor countries, especially the US, which has reduced funding globally since the Trump administration, representing approximately 25 percent of Bangladesh's deployed peacekeepers. The Daily Star A contribution Bangladesh built painstakingly over thirty-five years is being unmade in months by decisions made in Washington, D.C. The strategic, economic, and institutional implications of this contraction demand the most serious analytical attention.

This Part provides that attention across sixteen chapters, ranging from the deepest historical and philosophical roots of Bangladesh's peacekeeping identity through the most pressing current crises to the long-range vision for what Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution should look like in 2040 and beyond.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PEACEKEEPING AS AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION

1.1 The Idea of Collective Security: From Kant to the Covenant

The intellectual history of peacekeeping as a concept is inseparable from the broader history of international thought about collective security, which is the idea that states can most effectively protect themselves from aggression not through individual self-reliance or bilateral alliances but through a collective institutional mechanism in which all members agree to regard an attack on any one of them as an attack on all, and to concert their resources in defense of the victim.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The philosophical foundations of collective security reach back to the same tradition examined in Chapter One of Part One of this textbook: to Kant's vision of a federation of republics in Perpetual Peace, to Grotius' articulation of the law of nations in De Jure Belli ac Pacis, and to the Enlightenment's broader aspiration that reason applied to international relations could substitute institutional mechanisms for the brutal logic of power. The eighteenth-century proposal of the Abbe de Saint-Pierre for a permanent European confederation with mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution, endorsed and developed by both Rousseau and Leibniz, represents perhaps the earliest systematic elaboration of what we now recognize as collective security thinking.

The first institutional incarnation of collective security in the modern era was the Concert of Europe, established by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. The Concert was a consultative mechanism through which the major European powers agreed to manage the international order through regular diplomatic consultation and to act collectively against states that threatened the balance of power. It was explicitly designed not as an egalitarian system of all states but as a great power directorate, and its fundamental logic of managing international order through the concerted will of the most powerful states has never entirely disappeared from international institutions, most visibly surviving in the veto-equipped permanent membership structure of the United Nations Security Council.

The League of Nations, established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 as part of the post-World War I settlement, represented the first genuine attempt at universal collective security with formal institutional machinery for peaceful dispute resolution and sanctions against aggressors. Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which provided the intellectual framework for the League, drew directly on the Kantian liberal internationalist tradition, arguing that a community of democratic nations committed to self-determination and open diplomacy could make war obsolete. The League's failure, as analyzed by E.H. Carr in The Twenty Years' Crisis, was not primarily a failure of institutional design, though the design had significant flaws, but a failure of political will by the major powers, particularly the United States Senate's refusal to join, Britain and France's unwillingness to risk another war to enforce collective security against the fascist aggressors of the 1930s, and the inability of the liberal internationalist framework to address the legitimate grievances of states that had been humiliated by the post-World War I settlement.

1.2 The United Nations Charter and the Architecture of Collective Security

The United Nations Charter of 1945, drafted in the shadow of the League's failure and the Second World War's catastrophic demonstration of what unchecked aggression could produce, attempted a more sophisticated and more realistic architecture of collective security. It concentrated enforcement authority in the Security Council, whose five permanent members, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and China, were required to act unanimously on enforcement measures, reflecting the designers' judgment that collective security could only work if the great powers themselves were committed to it.

The Charter's Chapter VII authorized the Security Council to determine the existence of threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression, and to take measures ranging from sanctions to military force to restore international peace and security. Chapter VII was designed to allow the Council to command member states' military forces for enforcement operations under Article

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

43 agreements that were supposed to be negotiated with each member state in advance. These Article 43 agreements were never concluded, because the Cold War divisions between the American and Soviet blocs immediately destroyed the great power unanimity that the system required, and the UN Military Staff Committee established by Article 47 to coordinate collective military operations was never given anything meaningful to do.

This structural failure of the Charter's enforcement architecture created the conditions for the emergence of peacekeeping, which is not a concept mentioned anywhere in the Charter. Dag Hammarskjold, the second UN Secretary-General, famously described peacekeeping as falling under "Chapter Six and a Half" of the Charter, somewhere between the peaceful settlement provisions of Chapter VI and the enforcement provisions of Chapter VII: neither purely consensual mediation nor coercive enforcement, but something in between that required the consent of the parties to a conflict, the impartiality of the deploying force, and the use of force only in self-defense.

1.3 The First Generation of Peacekeeping: UNEF and the Development of Doctrine

The first United Nations Emergency Force, deployed to Egypt in 1956 in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis, established the foundational principles of classical peacekeeping and created the institutional template that would govern UN peacekeeping operations for the subsequent three decades. UNEF was created over the explicit opposition of France and the United Kingdom, whose military intervention in Egypt it was deployed to end, and without the authorization of the Security Council, which was deadlocked by the Anglo-French veto, through a special session of the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace resolution procedure.

The UNEF model established what became known as the "Holy Trinity" of traditional peacekeeping: consent of the parties to the conflict to the mission's presence and mandate, impartiality of the peacekeeping force as between the parties, and non-use of force except in self-defense. These three principles defined the boundaries within which classical peacekeeping operated and reflected a specific theory of how peacekeeping contributed to peace: not by defeating aggressors or enforcing outcomes but by separating combatants, monitoring ceasefires, and creating space for diplomatic processes to reach negotiated settlements.

The classical peacekeeping model worked reasonably well in conditions where states consented to the deployment, where the parties had reached a genuine ceasefire, and where the fundamental conflict was between states rather than within states. It proved deeply problematic when these conditions were absent, as the disastrous ONUC operation in the Congo in the early 1960s demonstrated. The Congo operation confronted the UN with a state whose government was contested, whose ceasefire was incomplete, and whose internal conflict drew in great power interests in ways that made impartiality nearly impossible to maintain. The lessons of ONUC were largely ignored, and the classical peacekeeping model continued to dominate UN thinking until the catastrophic failures of the 1990s forced a fundamental reconsideration.

1.4 The Post-Cold War Transformation: From Classical to Complex Peacekeeping

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The end of the Cold War in 1989 to 1991 created both new opportunities and new crises for UN peacekeeping. The removal of great power vetoes from Security Council decision-making on many regional conflicts allowed the Council to authorize missions that Cold War competition had previously blocked. The number of UN peacekeeping operations expanded dramatically in the early 1990s, from 5 active operations in 1988 to 17 by 1994, and the character of the missions changed fundamentally. The new missions were deployed not to monitor interstate ceasefires but into ongoing intrastate conflicts, civil wars, ethnic cleansing campaigns, and state collapse situations where the "Holy Trinity" principles had little or no application.

The catastrophes of the early 1990s, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 where the UN mission UNAMIR stood aside as 800,000 people were killed in 100 days, the humiliation of UNPROFOR in Bosnia where UN peacekeepers became hostages and spectators to ethnic cleansing, and the "Black Hawk Down" debacle in Somalia where American soldiers were killed and the US withdrew its forces, precipitated a fundamental rethinking of what UN peacekeeping was for and what it required to be effective.

The Brahimi Report of 2000, commissioned by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and authored by a panel chaired by former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi, provided the most systematic post-Cold War analysis of peacekeeping's failures and the most comprehensive set of recommendations for reform. The report's core finding was brutally honest: the UN had been sending peacekeeping missions into situations where there was no peace to keep, with mandates that were unclear or inadequate, with resources that were insufficient for the tasks assigned, and with a political support infrastructure in the Security Council and in troop-contributing countries that was not commensurate with the missions' actual requirements.

The Brahimi Report's specific recommendations included the development of rapidly deployable headquarters capacity, the pre-positioning of strategic reserves for rapid deployment, more robust rules of engagement that permitted peacekeepers to use force to protect civilians as well as themselves, clearer and more achievable mandates, and improved integration between peacekeeping operations and the political and peacebuilding strategies they were meant to support. Many of these recommendations were partially implemented, and the decade following the Brahimi Report saw the development of what is now called the "protection of civilians" norm as a core peacekeeping mandate.

CHAPTER TWO: BANGLADESH'S ENTRY INTO PEACEKEEPING: HISTORY, MOTIVATIONS, AND THE STRATEGIC LOGIC OF THE BLUE HELMET

2.1 The Historical Context: 1988 and the Decision to Deploy

Bangladesh's participation in UN peacekeeping began in 1988, with the deployment of military observers to the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group, a mission established to monitor the ceasefire that ended the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. This initial deployment was

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

modest in scale, a small contingent of military observers rather than a formed military unit, and it was primarily symbolic in nature: a newly sovereign state, barely seventeen years old and still recovering from the political violence and economic disruption of its first two decades of independence, demonstrating its commitment to the international order and its aspiration to play a constructive role in international peace and security.

The circumstances of 1988 are worth examining carefully because they illuminate the motivations that have continued to shape Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution. Bangladesh in the late 1980s was governed by General Hussain Mohammad Ershad, who had seized power in a coup in 1982 and was seeking to legitimize his government both domestically and internationally. External legitimacy through UN engagement was a rational strategy for a government that lacked democratic mandate and was under persistent domestic pressure from both the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Peacekeeping provided a visible demonstration of Bangladesh's international engagement and its armed forces' professional competence that served the Ershad government's political interests even as it served the country's long-term strategic interests.

This duality, between the genuine national interest in peacekeeping and the specific political interests of incumbent governments in the prestige and resources that peacekeeping generates, has never entirely separated. Understanding it is essential for an honest assessment of Bangladesh's peacekeeping program.

2.2 The Strategic Motivations: Why Bangladesh Became a Leading Contributor

The transformation of Bangladesh from a modest initial contributor of military observers in 1988 to one of the world's three largest troop-contributing countries, ranked third globally as of January 2025 with 5,689 personnel deployed across multiple missions, United Nations was not accidental. It reflects the operation of several distinct but reinforcing strategic motivations that have been consistent across multiple governments of different political orientations.

The first and most fundamental motivation is the economic dimension. UN peacekeeping generates significant foreign exchange earnings for Bangladesh's military and, through the military's wages and benefits, for Bangladeshi families and the broader economy. With Bangladesh deploying approximately 6,300 troops and police across missions as of early 2025, personnel reimbursements alone yield over $100 million annually, augmented by equipment-related funds that can double or triple total inflows depending on contingent composition. In 2022, these contributions added more than $160 million to the national economy, representing a reliable stream of foreign exchange amid broader reserve pressures. Cumulatively, from fiscal year 2000-01 through 2022-23, Bangladesh's armed forces earned approximately $2.6 billion at prevailing exchange rates from peacekeeping reimbursements. Grokipedia

This economic logic is not shameful but it must be acknowledged honestly because it creates potential distortions in Bangladesh's peacekeeping policy. If the primary motivation for maintaining a large peacekeeping contribution is the foreign exchange income it generates and the benefits it provides to officers who deploy, the institutional imperatives of the peacekeeping program may diverge from the broader national security and foreign policy interests that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

peacekeeping should serve. A country that deploys primarily for economic reasons may be less attentive to whether the missions it contributes to are effectively fulfilling their mandates, less willing to withdraw forces from failing missions that continue to generate income, and less engaged with the broader policy questions about peacekeeping reform that a country deploying for strategic and ethical reasons would prioritize.

The second motivation is the soft power and diplomatic capital that a large peacekeeping contribution generates. Bangladesh has built over thirty-five years a reputation within the UN system as a reliable, professional, and substantial contributor to collective security that has translated into diplomatic relationships, voting support, and influence in international forums. This soft power is genuinely valuable for a small-to-medium state navigating an international system dominated by much larger powers. UN peacekeeping has given Bangladesh visibility, relationships, and a narrative of constructive international engagement that its economic or military weight alone could not purchase.

The third motivation is the professional development dimension. Peacekeeping deployments have provided Bangladesh's armed forces with operational experience, exposure to multinational command environments, familiarity with advanced military procedures and technologies, and the kind of practical military competence that cannot be easily replicated through domestic training alone. Bangladesh's military officers who have served in UN peacekeeping missions bring back knowledge of how advanced militaries operate, logistical experience in challenging environments, and professional networks that enrich Bangladesh's own military culture and capability. This is the motivation that best withstands ethical scrutiny because it is internally directed rather than dependent on the continuation of conflicts that kill and displace the world's most vulnerable populations.

The fourth motivation is the one that Bangladesh's official statements most frequently foreground: genuine commitment to the principles of the UN Charter and to the aspiration of international peace and security. This commitment reflects the values embedded in Bangladesh's own liberation experience, including the international solidarity that Bangladesh received in 1971 from countries around the world and the United Nations system in its struggle for independence, and the aspiration, embedded in both the Preamble and the Directive Principles of State Policy of Bangladesh's Constitution, that Bangladesh should contribute to the cause of international peace.

2.3 The Record of Service: Missions, Operations, and Human Cost

The breadth and depth of Bangladesh's peacekeeping service record is genuinely extraordinary. Since 1988, Bangladesh has successfully completed 63 peacekeeping missions in around 43 countries, with nearly 178,743 members of the armed forces having served in these missions during this long journey. In the last three decades until 2022, 165 Bangladeshi peacekeepers died and 258 were injured in the line of duty. Prothomalo

This service has encompassed the full range of UN peacekeeping activities. Bangladesh's infantry battalions, deployed as BANCON units, have conducted patrols and force protection missions in the most dangerous peacekeeping environments in the world, including the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Darfur. Bangladesh's engineering units have made distinctive contributions to mission infrastructure: Bangladeshi engineering units in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan repaired and rehabilitated over 400 kilometers of roads between 2018 and 2020, improving mission mobility, enabling faster responses to security threats, and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid to remote populations. Grokipedia

Bangladesh's aviation contributions through the Bangladesh Air Force have been particularly valued. In the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Bangladesh Air Force contingents provided aviation support from 2013 onward, including troop transport, reconnaissance, and medical evacuations across expansive and hostile terrain, which bolstered the mission's capacity to deter insurgent activities and safeguard civilian sites despite high operational risks. Grokipedia The hazardous nature of these aviation missions in environments such as Mali, where MINUSMA suffered the highest casualty rates of any UN peacekeeping mission since the Congo operation of the 1960s, speaks to the genuine personal courage of Bangladeshi peacekeepers who have accepted extraordinary risks in service of collective security.

Bangladesh's police contribution, through Formed Police Units and Individual Police Officers, has added a civilian protection dimension to its peacekeeping service that goes beyond what military contingents alone can provide. Formed Police Units are particularly valuable in the transition phases of peacekeeping, when missions must support host-country police reform and maintain public order in environments where the host country's own security forces are not yet capable of doing so independently. Bangladesh Police's experience in the complex and often violent social environment of Bangladesh itself, including experience in crowd control, riot management, and community policing in highly congested urban environments, translates into operational skills that are genuinely useful in peacekeeping contexts.

CHAPTER THREE: THE GENDER DIMENSION OF BANGLADESH'S PEACEKEEPING: ACHIEVEMENT, ASPIRATION, AND UNRESOLVED CONTRADICTIONS

3.1 Women Peacekeepers and the UN's Gender Agenda

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000, the foundational document of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, established the principle that women's participation in all dimensions of peace processes, including peacekeeping operations, is not merely a matter of gender equality but a matter of operational effectiveness. The resolution recognized that women peacekeepers can engage with local women populations in ways that male peacekeepers often cannot, can identify protection needs that are invisible to male-dominated security presences, and can serve as role models for women in post-conflict societies that are attempting to rebuild gender-equitable social institutions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The evidence base for the operational effectiveness argument has grown substantially since 2000. Studies of UN peacekeeping missions have consistently found that the presence of female peacekeepers increases communities' willingness to report sexual and gender-based violence to the mission, reduces the incidence of sexual exploitation and abuse by mission personnel in part through a demonstrated commitment to accountability, and enhances the mission's overall legitimacy in the eyes of local populations including local women who make up half of every affected population.

For Bangladesh, the Women, Peace and Security agenda intersects with a distinctive national narrative. As of 2025, over 1,700 Bangladeshi women have served in UN peacekeeping missions, with 373 currently deployed in various capacities. In 2015, Bangladesh made history by deploying the first all-Muslim, all-female peacekeeping unit to Haiti under MINUSTAH, consisting of 160 women, praised internationally for professionalism and cultural sensitivity. Their deployment was featured in the award-winning documentary Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers. Wikipedia

This achievement has been one of Bangladesh's most successful pieces of peacekeeping-related public diplomacy, demonstrating to the world and to Muslim-majority societies globally that Bangladeshi Muslim women are capable of serving as international peacekeepers in dangerous environments, and challenging the stereotypes about Muslim women that continue to distort Western and sometimes domestic Bangladeshi perceptions.

At the Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial in May 2025, the most significant recent gathering of peacekeeping nations, Bangladesh pledged, among other commitments, to ensure 15 percent female participation in police contingents and to implement an AI-integrated camp surveillance and response system. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha These pledges represent significant institutional commitments that will need to be backed by concrete policy, training, and recruitment changes within Bangladesh's police and armed forces to be realized.

3.2 The Gap Between Aspiration and Achievement: Structural Barriers

Despite Bangladesh's genuine achievements in women's peacekeeping participation, there remain significant structural barriers within Bangladesh's armed forces and police that limit women's participation and that must be honestly identified and addressed for the pledges made at Berlin to be fulfilled.

The Bangladesh Army, which provides the largest contingent of Bangladesh's peacekeeping deployments, maintains a gender structure that reflects the broader social constraints on women's participation in physically demanding and operationally dangerous military roles. Women officers in the Bangladesh Army are primarily concentrated in medical, signals, and administrative roles rather than in combat arms and operational commands. While these roles are genuinely valuable in peacekeeping contexts, the concentration of women in support functions rather than operational commands limits their visibility and their authority in the peacekeeping environment and signals a ceiling on women's professional advancement that is inconsistent with the full realization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bangladesh Police, which contributes Formed Police Units and Individual Police Officers to UN missions, faces somewhat different but equally significant barriers. Women represent a small fraction of Bangladesh Police's strength relative to their share of the population, and recruitment, training, and promotion systems have historically disadvantaged women. The pledge of 15 percent female participation in police contingents, made at Berlin in 2025, requires not just a commitment at the level of peacekeeping deployment but a systemic reform of police gender policies that creates the pool of trained, experienced women officers from which peacekeeping deployments can be drawn.

The jurisprudential dimension of women's participation in Bangladesh's security forces is anchored in the constitutional guarantee of equality between men and women in Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution, which prohibit discrimination on grounds of sex and require the state to take measures in favor of women and children. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh has interpreted these provisions to require not merely formal non-discrimination but substantive measures to overcome the structural disadvantages that women face in access to public employment including military and police service. A constitutional argument can therefore be made not merely for the desirability of women's participation in peacekeeping but for its constitutional mandate.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE LEGAL ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S PEACEKEEPING PARTICIPATION

4.1 The International Legal Framework: Status of Forces Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding

Bangladesh's peacekeeping deployments operate within a complex and layered legal framework that begins with the international legal instruments governing the UN peacekeeping system and extends through the specific arrangements applicable to each mission. Understanding this framework is essential for both the constitutional analysis of Bangladesh's peacekeeping obligations and the practical legal analysis of the rights and responsibilities of Bangladesh's deployed personnel.

At the foundational level, UN peacekeeping operations are authorized by Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the Charter, or under a combination of both. The authorizing resolution establishes the mission's mandate, the scope of its authority to use force, its geographic area of operations, and its relationship to the host state and other parties to the conflict. For Bangladesh as a troop-contributing country, the Security Council's authorizing resolution creates the legal framework within which Bangladesh's contribution must operate, and Bangladesh's commanders in the field are bound by the mandate and the rules of engagement derived from it regardless of any instructions from Dhaka.

The specific legal relationship between Bangladesh and the United Nations for each peacekeeping deployment is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding between Bangladesh

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and the UN Department of Peace Operations, negotiated for each mission. The MOU covers the specific capabilities and numbers of troops or police Bangladesh will provide, the equipment that Bangladesh will bring, the reimbursement rates applicable to the contribution, the logistical arrangements for deployment and sustainment, and the standards of conduct and discipline that Bangladesh's contingent must meet.

Status of Forces Agreements, concluded between the United Nations and the host state of each peacekeeping mission, establish the legal status of UN peacekeeping personnel in the host country, including their immunity from the host country's criminal jurisdiction. The SOFA is a critical document for understanding who has the legal authority to investigate and prosecute peacekeeping personnel who commit crimes while deployed, because SOFA immunities transfer jurisdiction from the host state to the troop-contributing country. When a Bangladeshi peacekeeper commits a crime in, say, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the DRC does not have jurisdiction to prosecute under the SOFA; the prosecution authority rests with Bangladesh. This arrangement has been one of the central causes of the accountability failure for sexual exploitation and abuse that has plagued UN peacekeeping, as analyzed in Chapter Seven of this Part.

4.2 The Domestic Legal Framework: Constitutional Authority and Statutory Gaps

The domestic legal framework governing Bangladesh's participation in peacekeeping operations is, like much of Bangladesh's defense law, characterized more by gaps and ambiguities than by clear and comprehensive legislative provision. The Constitution of Bangladesh does not explicitly address peacekeeping, and the question of the constitutional basis for the deployment of Bangladesh's armed forces on UN peacekeeping missions has received surprisingly little serious legal analysis.

Article 46 of the Constitution provides that the President is the Supreme Commander of the Bangladesh Defence Forces. Article 61 of the Constitution, as amended, vests the executive authority of the Republic in the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. The Armed Forces Division, established under the President but operating through the Ministry of Defence, exercises administrative authority over the armed forces. None of these constitutional provisions specifically addresses the authority to commit armed forces to UN peacekeeping deployments, and there is no legislative framework that requires parliamentary authorization for such deployments.

The absence of parliamentary authorization requirements for peacekeeping deployments stands in significant contrast to the constitutional frameworks of many democracies that have grappled seriously with the question of democratic accountability for overseas military deployments. Germany's constitutional framework requires Bundestag approval for all overseas deployments of the Bundeswehr. Japan's Peace Keeping Operations Law of 1992 established a specific statutory framework with significant parliamentary oversight. Australia and Canada, while not requiring advance parliamentary authorization in all cases, have developed robust parliamentary accountability mechanisms for overseas deployments. Bangladesh has no equivalent framework:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

peacekeeping deployments are executive decisions that are notified to parliament as matters of information rather than authorized by parliament as matters of constitutional requirement.

The case for requiring parliamentary authorization, or at minimum parliamentary notification and review within a specified time frame, of Bangladesh's peacekeeping deployments rests on several constitutional principles. The first is the democratic accountability principle: decisions to deploy military force, even in pursuit of the peaceful purposes of UN peacekeeping, involve risks to the lives of Bangladeshi citizens serving as peacekeepers and financial commitments of public resources that are subject to parliamentary oversight under the Constitution's appropriations provisions. The second is the foreign policy oversight principle: peacekeeping deployments are simultaneously military and foreign policy decisions, and Bangladesh's Constitution envisions parliamentary oversight of both. The third is the constitutional history principle: Bangladesh's tragic experience with military deployments made by executive decision without democratic accountability, most notably the armed forces' domestic political interventions, argues for legislative constraints on executive decisions about military deployment even in the international sphere.

A comprehensive Peacekeeping Participation Act should be among the legislative priorities of any Bangladesh government committed to constitutional governance of its military. This Act should establish the process by which peacekeeping deployments are decided, the parliamentary notification and review mechanisms that apply, the rules of engagement framework that governs Bangladesh's contributions, the accountability mechanisms for conduct of deployed personnel, and the financial transparency requirements for peacekeeping income and expenditure.

4.3 Rules of Engagement, Use of Force, and International Humanitarian Law

The rules of engagement applicable to Bangladesh's peacekeeping contingents are a critical legal and operational issue that sits at the intersection of the UN's authority over mission conduct, Bangladesh's obligations under international humanitarian law, and Bangladesh's own domestic military law. Rules of engagement in UN peacekeeping have evolved significantly from the classical "self-defense only" principle of the first generation, through the increasingly robust authorizations of Chapter VII missions to use force to protect civilians and implement mandates, to the current situation where different missions have very different force authorization levels depending on the specific Security Council resolution.

The legal framework that governs how Bangladesh's peacekeepers can use force in a given mission derives from several sources simultaneously. The Security Council's authorizing resolution establishes the outer limit of permissible force for the mission as a whole. The Rules of Engagement issued by the Force Commander for the specific mission elaborate the operational application of the Council's authorization in the specific context of the mission. And Bangladesh's own military law, primarily the Army Act 1952 and the service acts for the Navy and Air Force, applies to the conduct of Bangladesh's individual soldiers and officers throughout their deployment.

The potential for conflict between these different legal frameworks is real and practically significant. A UN Force Commander's rules of engagement may authorize the use of force in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

circumstances where Bangladesh's own military law would require a more cautious approach. Conversely, Bangladesh's own cultural and military traditions regarding the appropriate use of force may lead its contingent commanders to exercise more restraint than the UN's rules of engagement technically permit, creating situations where UN mission leadership believes a Bangladesh contingent is failing to implement its mandate while the Bangladeshi commanders believe they are acting properly under their own legal and professional obligations.

The resolution of these tensions requires both better pre-deployment legal training for Bangladesh's peacekeeping commanders, so that they have a clear and sophisticated understanding of the legal framework within which they will operate, and better institutional coordination between the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division and the UN Department of Peace Operations in negotiating rules of engagement that both the UN mission needs and that Bangladesh can implement consistently with its own legal obligations.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF PEACEKEEPING: INCENTIVES, DISTORTIONS, AND THE QUESTION OF STRATEGIC COHERENCE

5.1 The Financial Architecture: How Peacekeeping Reimbursements Work

The financial mechanics of UN peacekeeping reimbursements are worth examining in some depth because they shape the incentive structures that influence Bangladesh's peacekeeping policy in ways that are not always openly acknowledged. The UN reimburses troop-contributing countries for their uniformed peacekeeping contributions at standardized rates set by the General Assembly and periodically revised. The basic reimbursement rate for military personnel, set at $1,428 per person per month as of the most recent revision, applies to all formed unit troops, individual military experts, and formed police unit officers. Separate reimbursements apply for contingent-owned equipment, based on a "Wet" rate that includes maintenance or a "Dry" rate that covers only depreciation, depending on who maintains the equipment in the field.

The equipment reimbursement dimension can be as financially significant as the personnel dimension for contingents that bring major equipment: ships, helicopters, armored vehicles, and engineering equipment all attract substantial reimbursement rates that can more than double the total financial return from a given contribution. Bangladesh's aviation assets in particular, helicopters and utility aircraft deployed to missions like MINUSMA and MONUSCO, attract equipment reimbursements significantly above the personnel rates.

The aggregate financial return to Bangladesh from peacekeeping is, as noted in the foreword to this Part, very substantial. The $100 million or more in annual reimbursements represents a significant and relatively stable source of foreign exchange earnings at a time when Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves face periodic pressure from trade imbalances, remittance fluctuations, and debt service obligations. The stability and predictability of peacekeeping income, compared

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

to the volatility of export earnings or private remittances, is a financial management argument for maintaining a large peacekeeping contribution independent of any strategic calculation.

5.2 The Distortions: When Economic Logic Overrides Strategic Logic

The economic incentives created by peacekeeping reimbursements create potential distortions in Bangladesh's peacekeeping policy that deserve frank analysis. Three specific distortions are worth identifying.

The first potential distortion is the tendency to maintain deployments in missions that are not achieving their mandates because the financial return from the contribution continues regardless of operational success or failure. If a Bangladesh contingent in a given mission is operating in a deteriorating security environment where the mission has effectively lost the ability to fulfill its protection of civilians mandate, the economically rational response from the perspective of the income stream is to maintain the deployment; the ethically rational response from the perspective of what peacekeeping is supposed to achieve may be to press for either a more robust mandate and better resources to fulfill it, or a managed withdrawal. Bangladesh's actual decision-making in these situations has not always clearly prioritized strategic and ethical logic over financial logic.

The second potential distortion is the allocation of military officers to peacekeeping deployments on the basis of the personal financial benefits they receive, rather than on the basis of the operational skills most needed for the specific mission. Individual officers benefit financially from peacekeeping tours through the combination of UN allowances, which are paid in dollars, and domestic military pay, creating very substantial earning differentials relative to domestic service. The competition for peacekeeping assignments within Bangladesh's military has at times been intense enough to create procurement and assignment processes that may not fully optimize for operational effectiveness.

The third potential distortion is the relationship between peacekeeping income and the military's broader institutional interests in relation to the civilian government. The financial resources that flow through the peacekeeping program give Bangladesh's armed forces a degree of financial independence and institutional prestige that can subtly reinforce the patterns of civil-military tension documented in Part Five of this textbook. An armed forces establishment that generates $100 million or more annually through its own international deployments has a material independence from the civilian government that is qualitatively different from an armed forces dependent entirely on the state budget.

5.3 The Foreign Exchange Crisis and Peacekeeping Income: 2024-2026

The specific financial crisis generated by the US funding withdrawal from UN peacekeeping deserves careful analysis in the Bangladesh context because it has arrived at a particularly vulnerable moment in Bangladesh's fiscal situation. Since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025, the US has sought to overhaul UN peacekeeping operations as part of a "back to basics" strategy designed to reduce costs and focus the UN on what it believes is its core

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

peace and security mandate. The US has indicated it will entirely forego its peacekeeping contribution in its 2026 fiscal year. Security Council Report

For Bangladesh, the fund cuts mean that approximately 1,400 Bangladeshi peacekeepers will be sent home by mid-2026, representing 25 percent of Bangladesh's deployed peacekeeping forces. Bangladesh has urged the UN to maintain a balance among nationalities when cutting personnel, requesting that the UN recruit adequate numbers from Bangladesh if the budget is increased. The Daily Star

The financial impact of losing 25 percent of peacekeeping income is significant but manageable within Bangladesh's broader budget framework, particularly because the repatriation of 1,400 peacekeepers also reduces the deployable personnel costs that Bangladesh bears. The more serious implications are strategic rather than immediately financial. The retrenchment of UN peacekeeping creates a structural shift in the international security environment that Bangladesh has relied upon as the platform for its soft power, its professional military development, and a meaningful portion of its defense identity. If UN peacekeeping continues to contract, Bangladesh must either find new platforms for its international security engagement or accept a diminished global presence.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CRISIS OF UN PEACEKEEPING: GREAT POWER COMPETITION, MANDATE FAILURES, AND THE UN80 REFORM PROCESS

6.1 The Structural Crisis of the Security Council and Its Peacekeeping Consequences

The structural crisis of UN peacekeeping cannot be understood separately from the structural crisis of the Security Council that authorizes it, and the structural crisis of the Security Council cannot be understood separately from the broader geopolitical transformation of the international system from the American-dominated unipolar moment of the 1990s to the contested multipolar environment of the 2020s.

During the years of greatest peacekeeping expansion and effectiveness, roughly 1995 to 2005, the Security Council was able to authorize ambitious multidimensional peacekeeping operations with broad mandates and substantial resources because the geopolitical conditions of that period, combining American leadership, post-Cold War Russian weakness, and Chinese restraint in Security Council proceedings on issues outside its immediate neighborhood, permitted the kind of great power agreement that effective peacekeeping authorization requires. The authorization of UNMIL in Liberia, ONUB in Burundi, UNOCI in Ivory Coast, and the ambitious MONUC in the DRC during this period reflects the relative ease with which the Council could reach agreement on peacekeeping mandates.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The progressive restoration of great power competition in the 2010s, accelerated by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the deepening of the US-China strategic competition, and the divergence of American, Russian, and Chinese interests in an increasing number of regional conflicts, has profoundly degraded the Security Council's ability to authorize effective peacekeeping responses to new crises. The last time the Security Council created a new peacekeeping operation was in 2014. A decade ago, the UN had 16 peacekeeping operations with 107,088 peacekeepers. Following the drawdown and exit of several peacekeeping missions, this number has decreased to 11 peacekeeping operations with 61,197 peacekeepers in 2025. Security Council Report

This contraction reflects not merely the closure of missions in countries where peace was established but the fundamental inability of the Security Council to authorize new missions in several of the worst ongoing conflict situations in the world, including Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan, because the great power dynamics of these situations make Security Council consensus impossible.

6.2 The Mandate Failure Problem: When Peacekeeping Cannot Keep Peace

Beyond the problem of authorization, the most serious challenge to UN peacekeeping's credibility and effectiveness is the mandate failure problem: the progressive disconnect between what peacekeeping missions are mandated to accomplish and what they can actually achieve given the political conditions on the ground and the resources available to them.

The Brahimi Report's core insight, that the UN had been sending missions into situations where there was no peace to keep, has not been fully absorbed by the Security Council in the quarter-century since the report was published. As the Security Council debated peacekeeping reform in September 2025, multiple member states warned against "one-size-fits-all approaches" and stressed that weak implementation of mandates often stems from a lack of political support locally, regionally and globally, requiring a "laser-like focus" on addressing the political questions at the heart of each conflict rather than deploying peacekeepers as a substitute for genuine political solutions. United Nations

The mandate failure problem has been most acute in the DRC, where MONUC and its successor MONUSCO have been deployed continuously since 1999, at cost of billions of dollars and dozens of peacekeeper lives, without achieving the stabilization of eastern Congo that their mandates have consistently called for. The fundamental reasons for MONUSCO's inability to fulfill its mandate are not primarily operational or resource-related: they reflect the absence of a political settlement between the DRC government and the armed groups operating in eastern Congo, and the continuing interference of regional state actors, particularly Rwanda, in the DRC's internal conflicts. No amount of additional peacekeepers, however well-trained and well-equipped, can substitute for the political solution that the Security Council has been unable to catalyze because its members have conflicting interests in the DRC's political outcome.

For Bangladesh, whose largest peacekeeping deployment as of 2025 is in MONUSCO, the mandate failure problem creates specific ethical and practical challenges. Bangladesh's peacekeepers in eastern Congo are operating in an environment where the mission's protection of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

civilians mandate is chronically underfulfilled, where attacks on peacekeepers including Bangladeshi peacekeepers have resulted in deaths and injuries, and where local populations have in several instances turned against MONUSCO in violent protests expressing frustration with the mission's failure to protect them. The question of whether Bangladesh's continued contribution to MONUSCO serves either Bangladesh's national interests or the international security purposes of UN peacekeeping requires honest reassessment.

6.3 The UN80 Reform Process and Its Implications for Bangladesh

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the UN80 reform process in 2025, in the context of the severe funding crisis and the political pressure from the Trump administration for dramatic cost reduction and institutional streamlining. As part of the UN80 reform process, nodding to the eightieth anniversary of the UN Charter, the Secretary-General has taken action on immediate savings by declaring that all parts of the Secretariat must cut a fifth of their staff in 2026, while assigning working groups representing different clusters of UN entities the job of plotting possible courses of longer-term restructuring. International Crisis Group

For peacekeeping specifically, the UN80 process has generated a comprehensive review of UN peace operations, led by the Department of Peace Operations, that is expected to produce a Secretary-General's report to both the Security Council and the General Assembly in early 2026. The Secretary-General is expected to conduct a review of UN peace operations as requested by the Pact for the Future, the outcome document of the September 2024 Summit of the Future, with Council members developing a formal response to the review and its recommendations. The review will address how field missions can adapt to evolving conditions while implementing their mandates, against the backdrop of expectations that there may be a strong push from the US to cut costs and do more for less. Security Council Report

Bangladesh needs to engage actively and strategically with the UN80 peacekeeping review. The outcomes of this review will shape the structure, mandates, and resources of UN peacekeeping for the next decade, and Bangladesh's interests as one of the three largest troop-contributing countries are directly affected. Bangladesh should be advocating within the review process for adequate financial resources to maintain mission effectiveness, for fair burden-sharing arrangements that recognize the disproportionate contribution of Global South troop-contributing countries, for improved pre-deployment training and equipment standards that protect peacekeepers' lives, and for more effective political support from the Security Council for missions in which Bangladesh's personnel are being put at risk.

At the Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial in May 2025, which brought together representatives from over 160 countries and was the largest such gathering of peacekeeping nations to date, Bangladesh pledged to deploy specialized military and police units, enhance female participation, implement an AI-integrated camp surveillance and response system, and install 1.8 MW solar panels in existing UN missions to support environmental sustainability. Bangladesh's Foreign Adviser emphasized the importance of building strong partnerships among host governments, troop and police contributing countries, peacekeepers in the field, and the UN Secretariat when modifying mission mandates, and called for urgent international action to address existing funding gaps. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

These pledges signal Bangladesh's continued commitment to peacekeeping modernization even in the context of the funding crisis, and they align with the UN's agenda for making peacekeeping more technologically sophisticated, more gender-inclusive, and more environmentally sustainable. But pledges at ministerial conferences have historically been easier to make than to implement, and Bangladesh's credibility as a contributor requires that it develop concrete implementation plans, with timelines and resource commitments, for each of the pledges made at Berlin.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ACCOUNTABILITY CRISIS: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN UN PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 The Scale of the Problem: Evidence and History

The problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel is one of the most serious and most persistently unresolved challenges in UN peacekeeping governance. It has generated extensive documentation, numerous reform initiatives, strong rhetorical commitment from successive Secretaries-General, and, ultimately, insufficient accountability and inadequate change in the culture of impunity that sustains it.

The problem received its most intense public attention following revelations in 2004 and 2005 of systematic sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers in the DRC, where peacekeepers from multiple troop-contributing countries were found to have exploited vulnerable Congolese women and girls through the exchange of sex for food, money, and other material goods, and where some peacekeepers had committed outright rape. An investigation commissioned by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and led by former Jordanian ambassador Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein produced the landmark Zeid Report in 2005, which provided the first systematic analysis of the problem's scope, causes, and necessary remedies.

The Zeid Report's core findings were damning. The combination of SOFA immunities that removed UN peacekeepers from host-country jurisdiction, the weakness of troop-contributing countries' disciplinary and prosecution systems, the economic vulnerability of local populations that created conditions for the exploitation of sex for material goods, the absence of effective reporting mechanisms, and the culture of institutional denial and cover-up within peacekeeping missions had together created a system in which sexual exploitation and abuse could occur with high frequency and near-total impunity.

Allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation in UN peacekeeping and political missions topped 100 for the third time in the last 10 years in 2024, with 65 of the allegations involving women who gave birth after saying they were raped and were seeking child support. Since 2006, approximately 750 paternity and child support claims involving UN peacekeeping personnel

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

have been reported, but more than 500 are still pending, with all claims referred to the peacekeeper's home country to resolve, but most not having taken meaningful action. The UN Secretary-General's 2025 report found that while UN training on sexual misconduct is mandatory, a 2024 survey of 64,585 UN staff found that 3.65 percent said it was acceptable to pay for sex, and close to 1 percent said it was acceptable to engage in sexual activity with a child. NPR

These numbers represent the documented surface of a problem that is certainly more extensive, given the significant barriers to reporting that exist in conflict-affected environments where victims face stigma, retaliation risks, and institutional distrust. The persistence of the problem twenty years after the Zeid Report and after every reform initiative launched by successive Secretaries-General reflects structural failures that have not been adequately addressed.

7.2 Bangladesh's Record and Its Responsibilities

Bangladesh's specific record on sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in UN peacekeeping requires honest examination. Bangladesh, as the third-largest troop-contributing country, statistically has more personnel deployed in the missions where most allegations arise, particularly MONUSCO in the DRC and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, than most other states. Two UN peacekeeping missions accounted for 82 percent of the 102 allegations in 2024, with Congo contributing 44 and the Central African Republic 40. NPR

The UN's public database of misconduct allegations by nationality does not break down all allegations by contributing country in a way that allows precise comparisons, but Bangladesh has been listed in various reports as having allegations against its personnel. More importantly, the systemic accountability failures that the Zeid Report identified apply to Bangladesh as they do to all troop-contributing countries: Bangladesh's domestic judicial system has primary jurisdiction over allegations of crimes by its deployed peacekeepers, and the record of the Bangladesh military justice system in prosecuting peacekeeping-related misconduct has not been systematically documented or evaluated in any publicly available analysis.

The accountability gap for Bangladesh has both institutional and legal dimensions. On the institutional side, the Bangladesh Armed Forces Division's procedures for receiving, investigating, and acting upon allegations of misconduct by deployed personnel are not publicly documented or independently auditable. The absence of transparency in these procedures means that neither the UN, nor civil society organizations, nor Bangladesh's own parliament can verify whether Bangladesh is meeting its obligations under the memoranda of understanding it has signed with the UN, which commit Bangladesh to holding its personnel accountable for misconduct.

On the legal side, the Bangladesh military justice system operates under the Army Act 1952 and its equivalents, which provide court-martial jurisdiction over offenses committed by military personnel anywhere in the world. But the Army Act does not specifically address sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping contexts as a distinct category of offense with specific evidentiary procedures adapted to the cross-border and cross-cultural challenges of investigating such offenses. The reforms to Bangladesh's military justice legislation proposed throughout this

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

textbook series should specifically include provisions for the investigation and prosecution of sexual exploitation and abuse offenses committed in peacekeeping deployments.

7.3 The Paternity and Child Support Crisis: Bangladesh's Legal Obligations

The paternity and child support dimension of the sexual exploitation and abuse problem deserves specific attention because it represents perhaps the most concrete and most measurable accountability failure in the entire peacekeeping misconduct landscape. Approximately 750 paternity and child support claims involving UN peacekeeping personnel have been reported since 2006, with more than 500 still pending. All claims are referred to the peacekeeper's home country to resolve, but most countries have not taken meaningful action. The Secretary-General urged countries to take decisive action to hold their nationals accountable and to ensure that children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse receive the rights they are entitled to, including citizenship. NPR

For Bangladesh, the paternity and child support question has legal dimensions that extend beyond the military justice system into civil law, family law, and constitutional law. Children born to Bangladeshi peacekeepers in host countries have claims to paternity recognition, financial support, and potentially citizenship that Bangladesh's legal framework must address. Bangladesh's Citizenship Act and the Bangladeshi Nationality Order of 1972 provide for citizenship by descent through the father for children born to Bangladeshi citizens abroad, which means that children born to Bangladeshi peacekeepers in DRC or CAR may have legal claims to Bangladeshi citizenship that Bangladesh has a legal obligation under its own law to recognize.

The failure of Bangladesh, like most troop-contributing countries, to develop specific legal and administrative mechanisms for handling paternity and child support claims arising from peacekeeping deployments represents both a legal failure and a human rights failure. These children are among the most vulnerable people in the world, born of coercion or exploitation in some of the poorest and most conflict-affected communities on Earth, and they deserve legal recognition and material support from the states whose citizens fathered them. Bangladesh's development of a specific Peacekeeping Paternity and Child Support Act, establishing clear legal procedures for recognizing and meeting these obligations, would be both a human rights advance and a significant contribution to Bangladesh's credibility as a responsible peacekeeping nation.

7.4 Pre-Deployment Training and the Cultural Dimension

The most promising structural reform for addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping is probably improved pre-deployment training, both because it addresses the problem upstream before deployment and because it is within the direct control of each troop-contributing country rather than dependent on UN institutional reforms that require consensus among many actors. Bangladesh operates the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, which has become one of the more developed peacekeeping training institutions in the Global South and has trained personnel from multiple other troop-contributing countries as well as Bangladesh's own personnel.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

As of 2025, BIPSOT has trained over 10,000 Bangladeshi peacekeepers and continues to serve as a regional hub for peace operations education. BIPSOT has hosted international delegations and training collaborations with countries such as Australia, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. Wikipedia

The specific challenge for BIPSOT in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse is not merely the inclusion of training modules on the UN's standards of conduct, which are already part of the pre-deployment curriculum, but the development of training approaches that genuinely change the attitudes and behaviors that enable exploitation rather than merely ensuring that personnel can pass a multiple-choice test on the UN's policies. The evidence base from military training research suggests that the most effective approaches to attitude change in this domain combine clear and enforced command accountability, peer-level discussion and norm-setting rather than top-down instruction, and specific scenario-based training that develops practical competence in recognizing and responding to situations that could lead to exploitation.

The cultural dimension of this training challenge deserves honest acknowledgment. Some of the attitudes toward women and toward host-country populations that underpin sexual exploitation and abuse reflect social norms within Bangladesh's military culture that are deeply rooted and not easily changed by training modules alone. Effective prevention requires sustained leadership from senior commanders who model respectful attitudes and hold subordinates rigorously accountable, a cultural change initiative that goes beyond BIPSOT and into the daily life of Bangladesh's military institutions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: INFORMATION WARFARE, DISINFORMATION, AND THE COGNITIVE CHALLENGE IN PEACEKEEPING ENVIRONMENTS

8.1 The Information Environment of Contemporary Peacekeeping

The emerging technology developments analyzed in Part Eleven of this textbook have profound implications for UN peacekeeping operations in which Bangladesh participates, implications that go beyond the operational use of AI and UAVs to the fundamental question of how peacekeeping missions maintain their legitimacy in information environments that are actively contested by conflict parties, regional powers, and global disinformation networks.

Contemporary peacekeeping missions operate in information environments that have been transformed by social media, ubiquitous smartphone cameras, and the deliberate deployment of disinformation by conflict parties seeking to undermine the mission's legitimacy and effectiveness. The MINUSMA mission in Mali, where Bangladesh's Air Force operated, was subject to intensive disinformation campaigns organized by parties hostile to the mission's presence, including Russian-linked Wagner Group operators who spread false narratives about MINUSMA's operational failures and alleged abuses on social media platforms, in local media, and through community-level influence operations. These campaigns contributed to the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

deterioration of local popular support for MINUSMA and to the eventually successful demand by Mali's military junta that MINUSMA withdraw, which it completed in 2023.

MONUSCO in the DRC has faced similar information environment challenges, including violent protests by local populations who believed, in part due to disinformation campaigns, that the mission was either complicit with armed groups or simply incapable of protecting civilians despite its large and expensive presence. The killing of Bangladeshi and other peacekeepers during violent protests against MONUSCO in 2022 was partly a product of this degraded information environment.

For Bangladesh, whose peacekeepers serve in these contested information environments, the implications are both operational and institutional. At the operational level, Bangladesh's peacekeepers need training in how to engage with local communities in ways that build understanding and trust, how to respond to disinformation about their activities, and how to use social media and other communications tools to maintain the mission's legitimacy narrative in environments where adversaries are actively working to undermine it. At the institutional level, Bangladesh's peacekeeping training curriculum at BIPSOT needs to be updated to include specific modules on information environment management, strategic communications in peacekeeping contexts, and the identification and countering of disinformation.

8.2 The Role of Technology in Peacekeeping: AI, UAVs, and the Bangladesh Pledge

The pledge made by Bangladesh at the Berlin Ministerial in May 2025 to implement an AI-integrated camp surveillance and response system represents an important step toward technology-enhanced peacekeeping capability that aligns with the broader UN peacekeeping reform agenda. The UN has been progressively integrating technology into peacekeeping operations for more than a decade, including UAV reconnaissance systems in MONUSCO and UNMISS that have transformed the missions' situational awareness, biometric identification systems at checkpoints, and predictive analytics systems that attempt to forecast violence hotspots by analyzing patterns in incident data.

The AI-integrated camp surveillance system that Bangladesh has pledged reflects the specific security challenge of protecting UN bases and personnel against the kind of indirect fire attacks, vehicle-borne explosive devices, and complex assaults that have caused increasing casualties in high-risk missions. A well-designed AI surveillance system can process feeds from multiple cameras, motion sensors, and perimeter detection systems simultaneously, identify anomalies that human security personnel might miss during long surveillance duties, and alert human security forces to potential threats with sufficient warning time to enable response. The "human on the loop" architecture discussed in Part Eleven is appropriate for this application: the AI system enhances human situational awareness and reduces response time without removing the human from the decision to employ force in response to a detected threat.

The solar panel pledge of 1.8 MW capacity across existing missions reflects a different but equally important dimension of peacekeeping modernization: the environmental and logistical sustainability of peacekeeping operations in environments where fuel supply chains are

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

vulnerable and expensive to maintain. Dependence on diesel generators for electrical power generation has been a significant operational and financial burden for many UN peacekeeping missions, and the installation of solar generation capacity reduces both the logistical vulnerability and the environmental footprint of these operations. Bangladesh's pledge aligns with the UN's broader environmental sustainability agenda for peace operations and could position Bangladesh as a leading innovator in green peacekeeping, a niche that generates positive diplomatic visibility at relatively modest cost.

CHAPTER NINE: THE BRAHIMI LEGACY, THE HIGH-LEVEL INDEPENDENT PANEL, AND THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE

9.1 From Brahimi to HIPPO: The Development of Peacekeeping Doctrine

The Brahimi Report of 2000 was followed by a series of subsequent analytical and policy exercises that continued to develop UN peacekeeping doctrine in response to evolving operational experience and changing political contexts. The most significant of these was the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, known by the acronym HIPPO, which produced the report Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People.

The HIPPO report built on the Brahimi foundation while adding important new dimensions that reflected the specific lessons of peacekeeping in the 2005-2015 decade. Its central contribution was the articulation of the "primacy of politics" principle: that military and police peacekeeping operations, however robustly configured, cannot substitute for political processes that address the root causes of conflict and create the conditions for sustainable peace. This principle has become the foundational doctrine of contemporary UN peacekeeping thinking, though its practical implementation has been uneven.

The HIPPO report also reinforced the Women, Peace and Security agenda within peacekeeping, recommended stronger partnerships between UN missions and regional organizations particularly the African Union, called for improved use of technology in peacekeeping, and proposed a more flexible "spectrum of UN peace operations" concept that would allow the UN to deploy different types of operations, from traditional observer missions through special political missions to multidimensional peacekeeping operations and hybrid operations with regional organizations, depending on the specific political and security requirements of each situation.

For Bangladesh, the HIPPO report's insights have several practical implications. The primacy of politics principle suggests that Bangladesh should be pressing, in its engagement with UN peacekeeping governance, for missions in which it contributes to be matched with adequate political support from the Security Council and from regional organizations. The Women, Peace and Security agenda aligns with Bangladesh's own gender commitments in peacekeeping. The technology agenda aligns with Bangladesh's Berlin pledges. And the spectrum-of-operations concept suggests that Bangladesh might develop specialized capabilities, such as aviation assets,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

engineering units, and medical facilities, that are valuable across the full spectrum of UN peace operations rather than concentrating exclusively on infantry battalion contributions.

9.2 The Pact for the Future and Peacekeeping's Place in the 2030 Vision

The Pact for the Future, agreed by world leaders at the September 2024 UN Summit of the Future and negotiated through an intergovernmental process led by Germany and Namibia, provided the most recent comprehensive statement of world leaders' commitments and aspirations for the UN system including its peacekeeping functions. The Pact called for structural reform of the Security Council, greater representation of underrepresented regions including the Asia-Pacific, and a review of UN peace operations that the Secretary-General was mandated to conduct.

For Bangladesh, the Pact's call for Security Council reform is of particular strategic significance beyond its immediate relevance to peacekeeping. Bangladesh, as a major troop-contributing country that bears significant costs and risks in implementing Security Council mandates, has a strong institutional interest in the reform of the Council that authorizes those mandates. The current structure, in which five permanent members with veto power can block peacekeeping responses to crises in which they or their allies have interests, systematically disadvantages the troop-contributing countries that must operate in the resulting dysfunctional missions.

Secretary-General Guterres told the Security Council in October 2025 that expansion of membership is essential to ensure representation and fairness, especially for Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Asia-Pacific, whose voices are underrepresented despite bearing much of the burden of peacekeeping. A more inclusive Council could help overcome deadlocks and strengthen stability in today's multipolar world. United Nations

Bangladesh should be a vocal advocate for Security Council reform in the intergovernmental processes that will follow the Pact for the Future, not merely because of the abstract principle of representational fairness but because Security Council reform that gives greater voice to Asia-Pacific states would directly enhance the ability of the Security Council to authorize and support effective peacekeeping missions in which Bangladesh contributes. The long-term vision of a Security Council that is more representative of the states that actually bear the human and material costs of implementing its resolutions is a strategic interest for Bangladesh that deserves active diplomatic investment.

CHAPTER TEN: PEACEKEEPING AND CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE BLUE HELMET

10.1 Peacekeeping as a Civil-Military Bargaining Resource

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The civil-military relationship analysis developed in Part Five of this textbook identified the structural features of Bangladesh's armed forces that give the military disproportionate political influence relative to civilian institutions, including their organizational cohesion, their monopoly on coercive capacity, and their institutional prestige derived from the liberation war of 1971. UN peacekeeping has added a further dimension to the military's institutional prestige and financial resources that complicates the civil-military bargaining relationship in ways that have not been adequately analyzed.

The peacekeeping program has made Bangladesh's armed forces internationally recognized institutions whose professional reputation extends far beyond Bangladesh's borders. When senior Bangladesh Army officers meet their counterparts from other major troop-contributing countries, from the UN Department of Peace Operations, and from the Western military establishments that provide training and equipment support to UN peacekeeping, they operate in a context of institutional prestige that their domestic political relationship with the civilian government does not necessarily reflect. This international standing gives the armed forces a degree of autonomy from domestic political accountability that the constitutional principle of civilian control does not easily reach.

The financial dimension reinforces this autonomy. The foreign exchange earnings from peacekeeping flow through the Armed Forces Division rather than through the Ministry of Finance's consolidated revenue fund, creating a financial management question about the transparency and accountability of peacekeeping income that Bangladesh's audit institutions and its parliament have not fully addressed. The Comptroller and Auditor General's oversight of peacekeeping-related income and expenditure requires strengthening to ensure that these substantial public resources are managed with the same accountability standards that apply to other categories of public expenditure.

10.2 The Political Management of Peacekeeping Casualties

The deaths of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in UN service, 168 as of 2025, and the injuries of over 257 more, create a domestic political management challenge for Bangladesh's governments that has been handled with varying degrees of sensitivity and transparency. When peacekeepers die on distant missions in conditions of complex and contested conflict, the communication of the circumstances of their deaths to their families, the military community, and the broader public is both a matter of institutional obligation and a politically significant act.

The political salience of peacekeeper casualties has historically been handled in Bangladesh primarily through the narrative of national sacrifice and international service, which frames peacekeeper deaths as heroic contributions to global peace that bring honor to Bangladesh and to the armed forces. This narrative serves the institutional interests of the military and the political interests of incumbent governments by converting tragedy into a story of national pride, but it can also insulate the peacekeeping program from the critical accountability scrutiny that the circumstances of specific deaths and injuries might warrant.

A more constitutionally appropriate approach would be to supplement the narrative of honorable sacrifice with genuine institutional accountability: transparent investigation of the circumstances

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

of each death and significant injury, assessment of whether adequate protective measures were in place, and parliamentary review of mission security standards. The families of peacekeepers who die deserve not only national honors but honest information about why their relatives died and what is being done to prevent similar deaths.

10.3 The Post-2024 Interim Government and Peacekeeping Policy

The interim government that came to power following the July Revolution of 2024 has maintained Bangladesh's peacekeeping commitments and engagement with the UN peacekeeping system, as demonstrated by the active participation of the Foreign Adviser and the Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on Defence at the Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial in May 2025. This continuity reflects the deeply embedded institutional and financial stakes that Bangladesh has in the peacekeeping program, which make it resistant to disruption by political transitions.

But the post-2024 political environment has also raised new questions about the relationship between Bangladesh's peacekeeping program and its domestic political dynamics. The July Revolution was in significant part a revolution against the abuse of state power, including the use of security forces for political repression, and the new political environment creates an opportunity to reexamine the governance of the peacekeeping program with the fresh critical eye that the revolutionary moment opened.

Specifically, the new political environment should support reforms to peacekeeping governance that include greater parliamentary oversight of deployment decisions, greater transparency in peacekeeping income and expenditure management, more rigorous accountability for misconduct by deployed personnel, and a strategic review of Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution that honestly assesses whether current deployment patterns serve Bangladesh's national interests and peacekeeping's stated objectives rather than simply the institutional interests of the armed forces establishment.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY: SOFT POWER, INTERNATIONAL STANDING, AND THE LIMITS OF THE BLUE HELMET

11.1 Soft Power Theory and the Peacekeeping Contribution

The concept of soft power, developed by political scientist Joseph Nye in his 1990 book Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power and developed further in Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (2004), refers to the ability of a state to achieve its international objectives through attraction and persuasion rather than through coercive force or financial inducements. Soft power derives from a state's cultural values, political institutions, and policies that others find legitimate and admirable. For a small-to-medium state like Bangladesh,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

soft power is not a luxury supplement to hard power but one of the few genuinely available instruments of strategic influence.

Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution is its most visible and most internationally recognized source of soft power. The blue helmet carries associations of sacrifice, professionalism, and commitment to international peace that resonate positively with a wide range of audiences: UN member state governments that value peacekeeping as a collective security mechanism, Western donor governments that fund development assistance and look favorably on partner countries that contribute to international stability, Muslim-majority governments that value Bangladesh's role as a moderate Muslim-majority democracy engaged constructively in international institutions, and Global South states that see Bangladesh as a model of development and international engagement.

This soft power translates into tangible diplomatic benefits that are difficult to quantify but real. Bangladesh's consistent high ranking among troop-contributing countries gives it an institutional standing within the UN system that is disproportionate to its economic or military weight. The relationships built by Bangladesh's peacekeeping commanders and officers with their counterparts from other countries, the visibility of Bangladeshi officers in UN leadership positions, and the positive associations that the Bangladesh flag generates in the UN community all contribute to a diplomatic capital that Bangladesh's foreign policy establishment regularly draws upon.

11.2 The Limits of Soft Power: When the Blue Helmet Does Not Translate

The diplomatic capital generated by peacekeeping is real but not unlimited, and Bangladesh's foreign policy strategists should be clear-eyed about what peacekeeping-derived soft power can and cannot achieve. The limitations are both structural and situational.

Structurally, peacekeeping soft power does not translate easily into hard security guarantees. When Bangladesh faces actual security threats from its neighbors, the goodwill generated by its peacekeeping contributions in the DRC or Central African Republic provides no direct protection. The countries that most need to be influenced by Bangladesh's international standing, primarily India and Myanmar, are states whose strategic calculations are driven by their own regional interests rather than by their evaluation of Bangladesh's UN peacekeeping record. India's assessment of Bangladesh's strategic significance is driven by geography, water resources, trade, and the India-China competition; Myanmar's behavior toward Bangladesh regarding the Rohingya crisis is driven by its domestic ethnic politics and its military's institutional interests. Neither is meaningfully affected by how many blue helmets Bangladesh deploys in Africa.

Situationally, peacekeeping soft power can be damaged by the misconduct scandals analyzed in Chapter Seven of this Part. When Bangladesh peacekeepers are implicated in sexual exploitation or abuse, the positive associations of the blue helmet are replaced by negative associations of exploitation and impunity that can damage Bangladesh's international reputation more than the original contribution enhanced it. The reputational risk of the misconduct problem is therefore

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

not merely a humanitarian and ethical concern but a soft power strategic concern that Bangladesh's foreign policy establishment should take very seriously.

11.3 Peacekeeping and the UN Security Council: Bangladesh's Non-Permanent Membership Ambitions

Bangladesh has served twice as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, in 1979-1980 and in 2000-2001. In both cases, Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution was among the arguments that Bangladesh advanced in its candidacy, reflecting the logical connection between contributing significantly to the implementation of Security Council decisions and having a voice in those decisions.

The question of whether Bangladesh should pursue another Security Council non-permanent membership in the near term, and whether such a pursuit would be strategically wise, requires analysis of the diplomatic investment required, the competition for Asian seats on the Council, and the strategic value of Council membership relative to other diplomatic priorities. The Asian regional group that nominates candidates for Asian seats includes major powers including India, Japan, and South Korea that have their own Security Council ambitions and far greater diplomatic resources to deploy in Council election campaigns. Bangladesh's candidacy would need to be carefully timed and strategically positioned relative to the competition.

The strategic argument for Council membership from Bangladesh's perspective is substantially about peacekeeping: a Bangladesh that serves on the Security Council can advocate directly for adequate mandates and resources for the missions in which its personnel are deployed, for accountability for violations of peacekeeping rules of conduct, and for the political solutions that are the precondition for effective peacekeeping in the specific conflicts where Bangladesh is engaged. The argument is coherent and compelling, and Bangladesh should develop a medium-term diplomatic strategy for another Security Council bid that uses its peacekeeping credentials as its primary narrative.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE ROHINGYA CRISIS AND ITS PEACEKEEPING DIMENSIONS: A SPECIFIC ANALYSIS

12.1 The Intersection of Peacekeeping and the Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya refugee crisis, which has placed over a million displaced Rohingya on Bangladesh's territory in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char since 2017, creates a specific and largely underanalyzed intersection with Bangladesh's UN peacekeeping identity. Bangladesh has been simultaneously one of the world's largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations and the host country for the world's largest refugee population generated by crimes that may rise to the level of genocide or crimes against humanity under international law.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This intersection creates both opportunities and tensions for Bangladesh's peacekeeping diplomacy. The opportunity lies in Bangladesh's ability to leverage its peacekeeping credibility and its established relationships within the UN system to advance its advocacy for the Rohingya population, for accountability for Myanmar's military, and for international support for both the refugee population in Bangladesh and for the conditions in Rakhine State that would allow eventual return. A Bangladesh that has demonstrated thirty-five years of commitment to UN peacekeeping and that has 168 peacekeepers who died in service of the UN's collective security mandate has a moral standing and an institutional credibility in advocating for UN engagement with the Rohingya crisis that other states cannot match.

The tension lies in the fact that the very institutions Bangladesh relies on for its peacekeeping engagement, primarily the Security Council, have failed dramatically to address the Myanmar crisis. China and Russia have consistently blocked Security Council action on Myanmar, using their veto to prevent the kind of international pressure and potentially the kind of peacekeeping or monitoring mission that might contribute to accountability and to conditions for Rohingya return. The Security Council's failure on Myanmar demonstrates most acutely the limits of collective security in an era of great power competition, and it places Bangladesh in the painful position of contributing substantially to a collective security system that has failed most dramatically in the crisis that most directly threatens Bangladesh's own national interests.

12.2 The Case for a UN Monitoring Mission in Myanmar

The analysis in this section makes the case, grounded in both Bangladesh's specific interests and in general principles of international law and human rights, for Bangladesh to actively advocate for a UN monitoring or observer mission in Myanmar's Rakhine State, even though the Security Council's current political dynamics make such a mission difficult to authorize.

The precedent for UN monitoring missions in complex political and humanitarian situations outside of formal peacekeeping mandates is well-established. The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the UN Investigative Team for accountability of crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq, and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, established by the Human Rights Council in 2018 despite Security Council deadlock, all demonstrate that the UN system has mechanisms for deploying monitoring and accountability functions even when Security Council politics prevent a full peacekeeping authorization.

Bangladesh should be pressing, in the Human Rights Council, in the General Assembly, and in its bilateral diplomacy with Western states that share its interest in accountability for Myanmar's military, for the strengthening and resourcing of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar and for the development of additional monitoring mechanisms that could track conditions in Rakhine State and contribute to the evidentiary record that will be needed for eventual accountability processes. Bangladesh's willingness to speak clearly about the nature of the crimes committed against the Rohingya, including the use of the term genocide that successive Bangladeshi governments have been reluctant to employ, would strengthen its moral authority in these advocacy efforts.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: PEACEKEEPING LAW AND BANGLADESH'S LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: THE CASE FOR A PEACEKEEPING PARTICIPATION ACT

13.1 The Legislative Gap: A Detailed Analysis

The legislative gap in Bangladesh's governance of its peacekeeping participation has been identified at several points in this Part. This chapter develops the analysis in more detail and makes the specific case for comprehensive peacekeeping legislation. The argument draws on comparative constitutional law, international law, and the specific constitutional framework of Bangladesh.

The constitutional authority under which Bangladesh deploys its armed forces on UN peacekeeping missions is, as analyzed in Chapter Four of this Part, unclear. The Constitution's provisions on presidential command of the armed forces, executive authority over foreign affairs, and parliamentary oversight of public expenditure create a constitutional framework within which peacekeeping deployments are made, but they do not provide specific authorization, specific procedural requirements, or specific accountability mechanisms for those deployments. The result is that consecutive Bangladesh governments of different political orientations have deployed and recalled peacekeeping contingents primarily on the basis of administrative and financial considerations, without the constitutional clarity or the democratic accountability that a deployment policy involving the lives of Bangladeshi citizens and the commitment of public resources properly requires.

The comparative constitutional law argument draws on the experience of parliamentary democracies that have enacted specific legislation governing overseas military deployments. Germany's Parliamentary Participation Act of 2005, which requires Bundestag approval for all overseas deployments of the Bundeswehr, was the product of a constitutional jurisprudence developed by the Federal Constitutional Court in the 1994 Out-of-Area case, which determined that the Basic Law required parliamentary approval for armed forces deployments that had not been clearly anticipated by the constitutional text. While Bangladesh's constitutional framework differs from Germany's, the underlying constitutional principle is transferable: decisions that commit the armed forces and public resources to overseas operations in potentially dangerous circumstances are of sufficient constitutional significance to require parliamentary involvement beyond mere executive notification.

The international law argument draws on the accountability dimensions of Bangladesh's treaty obligations as a troop-contributing country. The MOUs that Bangladesh signs with the UN Department of Peace Operations commit Bangladesh to meeting specific standards of conduct, training, and accountability. Parliamentary legislation that implements these international commitments in domestic law would give them greater legal force and clarity within Bangladesh's constitutional system and would provide a mechanism for monitoring and enforcing compliance that the current purely executive framework does not provide.

13.2 The Draft Peacekeeping Participation Act: Key Provisions

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Peacekeeping Participation Act proposed here is designed to address the principal legislative gaps identified in this Part: the authorization gap, the accountability gap, the financial transparency gap, and the misconduct accountability gap. It draws on the best practices of comparable legislation in other parliamentary democracies, adapted to Bangladesh's specific constitutional framework and its specific peacekeeping situation.

The authorization provisions of the Act should establish that any decision to deploy Bangladesh's armed forces or police on a UN peacekeeping mission requires a decision of the Cabinet communicated to the Parliamentary Defense Committee within 7 days, and that the committee may require a full Parliamentary debate and resolution of approval within 30 days for any deployment expected to exceed 12 months or involving more than 500 personnel. For shorter or smaller deployments, notification and retrospective committee review within 30 days should be the minimum requirement. Emergency short-term deployments may be authorized by the Cabinet with immediate notification, but subject to parliamentary review and approval within 60 days. These provisions mirror broadly the frameworks of comparable democracies while accounting for the operational reality that peacekeeping deployments sometimes require rapid response that cannot await lengthy parliamentary processes.

The accountability provisions should establish specific legal responsibility for the investigation and prosecution of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, by Bangladesh's deployed peacekeeping personnel. The Act should designate the Judge Advocate General of the Bangladesh Army as the primary legal authority for misconduct investigations in peacekeeping contexts and establish specific evidentiary procedures for cross-border investigations that account for the practical challenges of gathering evidence in host countries. Time limits for investigation and prosecution of alleged misconduct should be established, with external reporting requirements to the UN and to the Parliamentary Defense Committee on the progress and outcomes of investigations.

The financial transparency provisions should require that all peacekeeping reimbursements be deposited into the Consolidated Fund and subject to standard parliamentary appropriation and audit procedures, rather than being managed through the Armed Forces Division without full parliamentary visibility. Annual financial reports on peacekeeping income and expenditure should be required, tabled before parliament and publicly available.

The conduct standards provisions should establish specific statutory authority for the rules of engagement framework that applies to Bangladesh's peacekeeping deployments, requiring that the rules of engagement approved for each specific mission be reviewed by the Military Legal Service for compliance with Bangladesh's treaty obligations under international humanitarian law and the UN Charter before Bangladesh's forces are committed to operate under them.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE FUTURE ARCHITECTURE OF UN PEACEKEEPING AND BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

14.1 Scenario Analysis: Three Futures for UN Peacekeeping

The analysis in this chapter employs scenario planning, a strategic planning methodology originally developed by Herman Kahn and the RAND Corporation in the nuclear strategy context and subsequently applied extensively in government and corporate strategic planning, to examine three possible futures for UN peacekeeping and Bangladesh's strategic positioning in each.

The first scenario is Continued Contraction, in which the current trends of great power competition, US disengagement, and UN funding shortfalls continue or accelerate, resulting in a further reduction in the number and scale of UN peacekeeping operations over the next decade. In this scenario, Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution would continue to shrink in absolute terms, economic returns from peacekeeping would decline proportionately, and the soft power value of Bangladesh's blue helmet identity would diminish as peacekeeping itself becomes a less significant element of the international security landscape. Bangladesh's strategic response in this scenario should be to develop alternative platforms for international security engagement, diversify its sources of foreign exchange and military professional development, and invest in the regional security architecture, particularly in the Bay of Bengal and the broader Indo-Pacific, that can provide alternative frameworks for Bangladesh's international security contribution.

The second scenario is Reform and Renewal, in which the UN80 process and the comprehensive peacekeeping review produce meaningful institutional reforms that address the mandate failure problem, establish more effective accountability mechanisms, and develop alternative financing models that reduce dependence on the US contribution. In this scenario, a smaller but more effective UN peacekeeping system would emerge, with clearer mandates, better-resourced missions, stronger political support from the Security Council, and more robust accountability for misconduct. Bangladesh's strategic response in this scenario should be to position itself as a high-quality, specialized contributor to this reformed system rather than the largest contributor measured by raw numbers. Investment in specialized capabilities, enhanced pre-deployment training, stronger misconduct accountability, and active engagement with peacekeeping governance reform processes would position Bangladesh favorably in a more demanding but more effective peacekeeping environment.

The third scenario is Fragmentation, in which the multilateral peacekeeping system increasingly loses effectiveness and legitimacy while regional security organizations, bilateral security agreements, and hybrid operations involving private military companies fill some of the resulting security vacuum. In this scenario, the AU-UN hybrid missions that have been developed in Somalia and the Sahel represent the direction of travel, and Bangladesh might find opportunities to contribute to AU-led or other regionally organized security operations that operate with more political support from the relevant regional actors than UN missions often receive. Bangladesh's investment in its relationships with African states through decades of peacekeeping would be particularly valuable in this scenario, as these relationships provide the diplomatic foundation for expanded engagement with African regional security mechanisms.

14.2 New Niches: What Bangladesh Can Offer the Evolving Peacekeeping System

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The scenario analysis suggests that regardless of which future materializes, Bangladesh's strategic interest lies in differentiating itself within the peacekeeping system through specialized capabilities rather than relying on the raw numbers advantage that is being eroded by the funding crisis and that would in any case become less strategically significant in a smaller and more specialized peacekeeping system.

The specialized capability areas where Bangladesh has genuine comparative advantages and should invest strategically include aviation, engineering, medical, counter-IED, and technology capabilities. Aviation assets, particularly helicopters, are among the most operationally valuable capabilities in contemporary peacekeeping and the hardest to replace through other means. Bangladesh's deployment of Mi-17 helicopters and utility aircraft to multiple missions has given its Air Force peacekeeping contingents a reputation for effectiveness and adaptability. Investment in newer aviation assets with improved performance in the high-altitude and extreme temperature environments of some UN mission areas would enhance this niche.

Engineering units are similarly valued for their specific contributions to mission infrastructure, road construction, bridge repair, and de-mining, that conventional infantry battalions cannot provide. Bangladesh's engineering units have demonstrated exceptional value in South Sudan and elsewhere. The development of specialized counter-IED engineering capabilities, training Bangladesh's engineers in the detection and disposal of improvised explosive devices that are the primary cause of peacekeeper casualties in high-risk missions, would both protect Bangladesh's own personnel and increase the mission value of Bangladesh's engineering contributions.

Medical capabilities represent a third niche where Bangladesh can differentiate itself. Field hospitals and level II medical facilities are critical mission enablers that the UN frequently struggles to source from troop-contributing countries, because they require significant investment in medical equipment and trained personnel that many contributors are reluctant to provide. Bangladesh's military medical establishment, which includes trained surgeons and medical officers with significant operational experience, could provide level II and potentially level III medical facilities to UN missions that would be among the most valued contributions Bangladesh could make.

The technology pledge from Berlin, specifically the AI-integrated surveillance system, represents a fourth niche that is particularly aligned with the direction of peacekeeping reform. As the UN peacekeeping system modernizes its use of technology, contributions of advanced surveillance and situational awareness systems will be increasingly valued. Bangladesh's development of genuine in-house expertise in peacekeeping-relevant technology, including surveillance systems, communications, and UAV reconnaissance capabilities, would differentiate Bangladesh from the many countries that contribute infantry battalions but lack these specialist capabilities.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PHILOSOPHICAL AND JURISPRUDENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF PEACEKEEPING: WHAT ARE WE REALLY DOING?

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

15.1 The Ethics of Peacekeeping: Deeper Philosophical Questions

This textbook has throughout engaged with the philosophical traditions that illuminate defense policy, from Kautilya's Arthashastra through Clausewitz's On War to the contemporary debates about autonomous weapons and military AI. The specific ethics of peacekeeping deserve the same philosophical examination, because the practice raises fundamental questions that are often obscured by the institutional habits and financial incentives of the peacekeeping system.

The most fundamental ethical question about UN peacekeeping is also the most rarely asked: does it work? If peacekeeping does not actually contribute to sustainable peace in the conflicts where it is deployed, if it merely prolongs conflicts by freezing situations that would otherwise evolve toward resolution, or if it generates more harm than benefit by providing cover for exploitation, diverting resources from more effective approaches, and sustaining international attention that relieves pressure for genuine political solutions, then the entire enterprise needs fundamental reconsideration rather than incremental reform.

The empirical evidence on peacekeeping effectiveness is actually more positive than the institution's critics often acknowledge. Multiple quantitative studies, including the influential work of Virginia Page Fortna at Columbia University, have found that UN peacekeeping missions significantly reduce the probability of conflict recurrence following ceasefires compared to conflicts with no peacekeeping presence. The deterrence effect of peacekeepers as witnesses to any resumption of fighting, the confidence-building effect of an impartial force between parties that distrust each other, and the organizational support that peacekeeping missions provide to peace process implementation all contribute to measurable improvements in post-ceasefire stability.

But the effectiveness evidence has important qualifications. Peacekeeping works best in situations where the parties genuinely want peace and need external assistance to implement it. It works poorly in situations where at least one party prefers continued conflict to a negotiated settlement, where there is no genuine ceasefire to monitor, or where the fundamental causes of conflict, whether resource competition, ethnic discrimination, governance failures, or external interference, remain unaddressed. The distinction between situations where peacekeeping adds value and situations where it merely sustains a fiction of international engagement while the underlying conflict continues is the critical analytical distinction that the Security Council most frequently fails to make.

For Bangladesh as a troop-contributing country, the effectiveness question has direct ethical implications. If Bangladesh is contributing personnel to missions that are not achieving their mandates and where there is no realistic prospect of effective peacekeeping given the political conditions, then Bangladesh is accepting the risk of harm to its own personnel and contributing to a system that is consuming resources without producing the peace it is supposed to be building. The ethical obligation to contribute to effective peacekeeping is not equivalent to the obligation to contribute to any operation that carries the UN's blue flag regardless of its effectiveness.

15.2 The Justice Dimension: Peacekeeping and the Responsibility to Protect

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Responsibility to Protect, articulated as a global norm at the 2005 World Summit, holds that states have the primary responsibility to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, and that when a state fails this responsibility, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action through the UN Security Council. R2P, as the norm is known, represents the most significant attempt to reconcile the principle of state sovereignty with the principle of human protection, and it has generated enormous controversy about when and how coercive international intervention in the internal affairs of states is legitimate.

Bangladesh's relationship to R2P is deeply paradoxical. Bangladesh is simultaneously a victim state, whose population the international community failed to protect in 1971 when Pakistani military forces committed mass atrocities, a host state, whose territory is bearing the consequences of Myanmar's violation of its responsibilities to protect the Rohingya population, and a contributing state, whose peacekeepers implement Security Council mandates that include civilian protection obligations. These three roles create different and sometimes conflicting positions on the R2P norm.

As a victim state, Bangladesh experienced in 1971 what R2P was subsequently developed to prevent: a state committing mass atrocities against its own population while the international community largely stood by. The Indian military intervention that ultimately ended the genocide was not authorized by the Security Council and was formally legally controversial, though its humanitarian outcome was unambiguous. Bangladesh's history should give it a deep commitment to the R2P principle and a clear-eyed appreciation of the political obstacles that prevent its consistent application.

As a host state for Rohingya refugees, Bangladesh is living with the consequences of the international community's failure to apply R2P effectively in Myanmar. The Security Council's inability to authorize a meaningful response to Myanmar's crimes due to Chinese and Russian vetoes demonstrates the fundamental weakness of the R2P norm as currently institutionalized: it can be invoked rhetorically and can generate investigative mechanisms but cannot, in the face of great power protection of the offending state, produce the protective action it promises.

As a contributing state to peacekeeping missions that include civilian protection mandates, Bangladesh is implementing a specific operational expression of the R2P principle through its peacekeepers' protection of civilians roles. The gap between the principle's aspiration and the operational reality of what peacekeepers can and cannot do in practice, documented through the MONUSCO experience in eastern Congo and many other missions, is a perpetual source of institutional frustration and ethical discomfort.

The philosophical resolution of these tensions requires engagement with the tradition of cosmopolitan ethics, represented in contemporary philosophy by figures such as Charles Beitz, Thomas Pogge, and David Miller, which argues that the moral duties of states and individuals extend beyond national borders to all human beings regardless of their citizenship. The cosmopolitan tradition provides philosophical support both for the R2P norm and for Bangladesh's peacekeeping engagement, grounding them in a universal moral framework rather than merely in institutional or financial incentives. Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution, at its

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

best, is an expression of the cosmopolitan principle that the lives of Congolese or Central African civilians have equal moral worth to the lives of Bangladeshi citizens, and that Bangladesh's participation in protecting them is a moral obligation as well as a strategic investment.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: TOWARD A BANGLADESH PEACEKEEPING DOCTRINE: SYNTHESIS AND STRATEGIC VISION

16.1 The Principles of Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Doctrine

The analysis developed across the preceding fifteen chapters supports the articulation of a coherent peacekeeping doctrine for Bangladesh that integrates strategic, ethical, legal, and institutional dimensions into a coherent policy framework. This doctrine should be publicly available, endorsed by parliament, and regularly reviewed in light of evolving circumstances. Its core principles are developed below.

The first principle is effectiveness before scale. Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution should be calibrated to maximize its actual contribution to peace rather than to maximize its ranking in troop-contribution league tables. This means that Bangladesh should be willing to withdraw from missions where the operational and political conditions make effective peacekeeping impossible and where Bangladesh's personnel are being put at risk without meaningful benefit to the population the mission is supposed to protect, even when withdrawal would reduce Bangladesh's overall troop numbers and the foreign exchange income derived from them. Strategic credibility in the long run depends on the quality and effectiveness of Bangladesh's contributions, not on their quantity.

The second principle is specialization over generalization. Bangladesh should invest in developing and certifying specialized capabilities, including aviation, engineering, medical, technology, and counter-IED, that provide the UN peacekeeping system with capabilities that are scarcer and more strategically valuable than additional infantry battalions. Specialization allows Bangladesh to maintain a high-value peacekeeping contribution even as the total size of the UN peacekeeping system contracts due to the funding crisis.

The third principle is accountability before deployment. Bangladesh's commitment to zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse must be backed by genuinely effective pre-deployment training, robust in-mission oversight and accountability, and transparent post-incident prosecution that imposes real consequences on offenders. The current gap between Bangladesh's rhetorical commitment to accountability and the actual institutional mechanisms for delivering it must be closed before the rhetoric can be credible.

The fourth principle is parliamentary sovereignty over deployment decisions. Bangladesh's commitment to democratic governance, reaffirmed by the July Revolution of 2024, requires that decisions to deploy the armed forces overseas be subject to genuine parliamentary scrutiny and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

authorization. The Peacekeeping Participation Act proposed in Chapter Thirteen of this Part should be enacted as a matter of constitutional priority.

The fifth principle is engagement over passivity in peacekeeping governance. Bangladesh has built over three decades one of the most significant institutional investments in UN peacekeeping of any state in the world. It should use that investment as the basis for active, principled, and strategic engagement in the governance of the peacekeeping system, including in the UN80 review process, in Security Council discussions about mandate design and resources, in the HIPPO follow-up process, and in the negotiations over peacekeeping financial arrangements that will determine the scope and effectiveness of the system in the years ahead.

16.2 Bangladesh's Peacekeeping Vision for 2040

The peacekeeping vision for Bangladesh's 2040 horizon, consistent with the broad strategic vision that has animated this textbook series, is of a Bangladesh that is not merely the largest or third-largest contributor to UN peacekeeping by numbers but one of the most respected, most effective, and most strategically purposeful contributors to international peace.

By 2040, on the basis of the policy framework proposed throughout this Part, Bangladesh should have enacted and effectively implemented a comprehensive Peacekeeping Participation Act that provides genuine democratic accountability for deployment decisions. It should have established a fully transparent peacekeeping financial management system under parliamentary oversight. It should have zero unresolved paternity and child support claims from its peacekeeping deployments. It should have a Conduct and Discipline Record that places it among the top performers in the troop-contributing community in terms of both the prevention of misconduct and the speed and thoroughness of its response when misconduct occurs. It should have developed specialized capabilities, including aviation, engineering, medical, and technology, that make Bangladesh one of the ten highest-value contributors to UN peacekeeping measured by operational capability rather than raw numbers. And it should have used its institutional standing to advance a more effective, more just, and more accountable UN peacekeeping system that better serves the populations it is deployed to protect.

This vision is demanding but achievable. It requires the political will to implement institutional reforms that cut against some vested interests within the peacekeeping establishment. It requires the transparency to acknowledge and address the accountability failures that have tarnished Bangladesh's peacekeeping reputation. And it requires the strategic imagination to see beyond the immediate financial returns of peacekeeping to the long-term strategic and ethical purposes that the blue helmet should serve.

CONCLUSION TO PART TWELVE: THE BLUE HELMET AND THE SOUL OF BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN POLICY

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The analysis developed across sixteen chapters of Part Twelve arrives at a conclusion that is both an assessment and an aspiration. The assessment is that Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution is one of the great institutional achievements of Bangladesh's foreign policy and defense history, representing a sustained and costly commitment to international peace that has generated genuine value both for the populations Bangladesh has helped protect and for Bangladesh's own strategic standing and professional military development. The aspiration is that this contribution, currently threatened by the funding crisis of multilateralism and in need of institutional reform to address its accountability failures, can be renewed and transformed into something more worthy of the sacrifices that 168 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have made with their lives.

The renewal requires the courage to be honest about what has not worked: the accountability failures, the financial distortions, the mandate failures that have put Bangladeshi lives at risk without producing the peace they were meant to build. The renewal also requires the imagination to see what peacekeeping could become: not the diminishing legacy institution that the UN80 process in its most pessimistic readings suggests, but a reformed and more effective expression of the cosmopolitan principle that every human life, wherever it is lived, deserves protection from the organized violence of states and armed groups.

Bangladesh's liberation of 1971 was the moment when the international community decided, however imperfectly and belatedly, that the lives of Bangladeshi people mattered enough to justify international engagement. Every Bangladeshi peacekeeper who has served since 1988 has been, in a sense, repaying that debt by deciding that the lives of Congolese, South Sudanese, Central African, and Malian people matter equally. Part Thirteen will address the constitutional reform dimensions of Bangladesh's defense governance: the specific legislative reforms, constitutional amendments, and institutional redesigns that the foregoing analysis across twelve parts has identified as necessary to create a defense policy framework that is constitutionally legitimate, democratically accountable, strategically coherent, and worthy of the sovereign nation that Bangladesh's people fought to create and have repeatedly struggled to sustain.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART TWELVE

UN Peacekeeping: Foundational and Theoretical Works

Fortna, Virginia Page. Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices After Civil War. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Howard, Lise Morje. UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Durch, William, ed. The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bellamy, Alex and Paul Williams. Understanding Peacekeeping. Second edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010.

Doyle, Michael and Nicholas Sambanis. Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Barnett, Michael. Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Koops, Joachim et al., eds. The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Diehl, Paul. Peace Operations. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

Leck, Christopher. "International Responsibility in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Command and Control Arrangements and the Attribution of Conduct." Melbourne Journal of International Law, Volume 10, Number 1, 2009.

UN Policy Documents and Reports

United Nations. Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report). UN Document A/55/305-S/2000/809. New York: UN, 2000.

United Nations. Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO Report). Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People. New York: UN, 2015.

United Nations. The Pact for the Future. New York: UN General Assembly Resolution 79/1, September 2024.

United Nations Secretary-General. Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. UN Document A/79/699. New York: UN, February 2025.

United Nations Secretary-General. Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. UN Document A/78/643. New York: UN, February 2024.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. UN Document A/59/710. New York: UN, 2005.

United Nations Department of Peace Operations. UN Peacekeeping: Fit for Purpose? Strategic Review of Peace Operations. New York: UNDPO, 2025-2026.

Women, Peace and Security

United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1325. S/RES/1325. New York: UN, October 2000.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Tryggestad, Torunn. "Trick or Treat? The UN and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security." Global Governance, Volume 15, Number 4, 2009.

Karim, Sabrina and Kyle Beardsley. Equal Opportunity Peacekeeping: Women, Peace and Security in Post-Conflict States. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Jennings, Kathleen and Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic. "UN Peacekeeping Economies and Local Sex Industries: Connections and Implications." MICROCON Research Working Paper 17, 2009.

Olivius, Elisabeth. "Governing Through Gender Equality: Expatriate Humanitarian Professionals and the Production of Transnational Political Space." Review of International Studies, Volume 40, Number 4, 2014.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Neethling, Theo. "Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peace Missions: The Scandal Unravelled, Some Responses and Persistent Dilemmas." Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Volume 37, Number 2, 2015.

Csaky, Corinna. No One to Turn To: The Under-Reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid Workers and Peacekeepers. London: Save the Children, 2008.

Smith, Rachel. "An Examination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations and the Zero-Tolerance Policy." Journal of Conflict and Security Law, Volume 22, Number 1, 2017.

NPR. "Sexual Misconduct Allegations in UN Missions Topped 100 in 2024." March 2025.

Bangladesh Peacekeeping

Armed Forces Division, Bangladesh. Official Website. afd.gov.bd.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training. Official Website. bipsot.mil.bd.

Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Bangladesh's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping. New York: BPMUN, 2025.

Grokipedia. "Bangladesh UN Peacekeeping Force." January 2026.

Wikipedia. "Bangladesh UN Peacekeeping Force." December 2025.

BSS News. "Bangladesh Pledges Specialized Units for UN Peacekeeping." May 14, 2025.

The Daily Star. "UN Peacekeepers: Nearly 1,400 Bangladeshis to Return Due to Fund Cuts." October 20, 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Daily Star. "UN Funding Crisis to Send 1,400 Bangladeshi Peacekeepers Home by Mid-2026." October 19, 2025.

Prothom Alo. "Financial Crisis at UN: 1,313 Bangladeshi Peacekeepers to Return Home." October 19, 2025.

Comparative Peacekeeping Legislation and Civil-Military Relations

Germany. Parlamentsbeteiligungsgesetz (Parliamentary Participation Act). Berlin: Federal Law Gazette, 2005.

Japan. International Peace Cooperation Law (Peacekeeping Operations Law). Tokyo: Government of Japan, 1992.

United Kingdom. House of Commons. Armed Forces Overseas Deployment. Hansard, various dates, 2023-2025.

Feaver, Peter. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Huntington, Samuel. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957.

Current UN Peacekeeping Crisis and Reform

International Crisis Group. "Ten Challenges for the UN in 2025-2026." September 25, 2025.

Security Council Report. "UN Peacekeeping, April 2026 Monthly Forecast." April 1, 2026.

Security Council Report. "The United Nations: Looking into the Future, October 2025 Monthly Forecast." September 30, 2025.

Security Council Report. "In Hindsight: Ensuring Effective Peace Operations in an Uncertain World, April 2025 Monthly Forecast." March 31, 2025.

Security Council Report. "UN Peacekeeping, September 2025 Monthly Forecast." August 29, 2025.

ISS Africa. "As the UN Turns 80, Is a New Era of Peacekeeping Possible?" 2025.

UN Security Council. Meeting Record. "With Conflicts at Highest Since 1946, United Nations Peacekeeping Remains Lifeline for Millions." SC/16162. September 9, 2025.

UN Security Council. Meeting Record. "Reform Imperative, Secretary-General Tells Security Council." SC/16201. October 24, 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Responsibility to Protect

International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. The Responsibility to Protect. Ottawa: ICISS, 2001.

Evans, Gareth. The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008.

Bellamy, Alex. Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to End Mass Atrocities. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.

Orford, Anne. International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Welsh, Jennifer, ed. Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Soft Power and Peacekeeping Diplomacy

Nye, Joseph. Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

Nye, Joseph. Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power. New York: Basic Books, 1990.

Bellamy, Alex and Charles Hunt. "Twenty-First Century UN Peace Operations: Protection, Force and the Changing Security Environment." International Affairs, Volume 91, Number 6, 2015.

End of Part Twelve

Part Thirteen will address the comprehensive legislative and constitutional reform agenda for Bangladesh's defense governance: the specific statutory reforms, institutional redesigns, and constitutional interpretive developments that the analysis across twelve parts has collectively identified as necessary to create a defense policy framework that is constitutionally legitimate, democratically accountable, operationally effective, ethically grounded, and worthy of Bangladesh's aspirations as a sovereign nation committed to both its own people's security and to the principles of international law. Part Thirteen will draft model legislation, analyze constitutional amendment possibilities, examine the comparative experience of states that have successfully reformed dysfunctional civil-military and defense governance frameworks, and provide a comprehensive legislative roadmap for the parliament and government of Bangladesh.

PART THIRTEEN: LEGISLATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM ARCHITECTURE FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE GOVERNANCE: STATUTORY REDESIGN, INSTITUTIONAL RECONSTRUCTION,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY, AND THE ROAD TO A SOVEREIGN DEFENSE LAW FRAMEWORK

Third Edition Revision, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART THIRTEEN

The twelve parts that precede this one have constructed, layer by layer, the most comprehensive analysis of Bangladesh's defense policy challenges that this textbook can offer. Part One built the philosophical and historical architecture. Part Two turned to comparative analysis, examining the defense policy transformations of Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Israel, Singapore, and Finland, drawing lessons appropriate to Bangladesh's particular condition. Part Three entered the legislative domain for the first time, identifying the gaps, contradictions, and inadequacies that characterize Bangladesh's existing statutory framework for defense governance. Parts Four through Eight examined operational doctrine, force structure, maritime strategy, intelligence architecture, and internal security in depth. Parts Nine through Eleven addressed the defense industrial base, emerging technologies, and the technological frontier of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence. Part Twelve devoted its entire attention to Bangladesh's extraordinary contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, the legal architecture that governs that contribution, and the reforms required to make it more durable, more effective, and more consistent with democratic values.

Part Thirteen now arrives at the destination toward which the entire preceding analysis has been pointing: the comprehensive legislative reform agenda. This is not a collection of incremental adjustments to existing law. The analysis developed across twelve parts has established beyond serious doubt that Bangladesh's defense governance framework, as it currently exists, is constitutionally incomplete, institutionally fragmented, democratically deficient, and operationally inadequate. What is required is not tinkering but transformation: a systematic, philosophically grounded, constitutionally anchored, and operationally realistic legislative redesign that creates for Bangladesh, perhaps for the first time in its history, a genuine framework of democratic defense governance.

The timing of this analysis is both urgent and historically significant. The July Revolution of 2024 that ended Sheikh Hasina's government did not merely change the occupants of the halls of power. It created a constitutional moment, a period of genuine political fluidity in which fundamental institutional redesign becomes possible in ways that are foreclosed during periods of political stability. The subsequent interim government under Muhammad Yunus, the promulgation of seventy-eight ordinances in 2025 across all domains of governance, the February 2026 parliamentary elections and the simultaneous national referendum on a package of constitutional reforms, and the arrival of a new elected parliament all create a window of opportunity that may not recur for a generation. The question is whether Bangladesh's political

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and legal community will seize this window with the intellectual seriousness and institutional courage that the moment demands.

Part Thirteen is written in the conviction that they can. It provides the intellectual architecture, the comparative precedents, the model legislative frameworks, the constitutional analysis, and the implementation roadmap that serious legislative reform requires. It does not offer simple prescriptions, because there are none. Defense legislation is among the most technically demanding, politically sensitive, and constitutionally consequential work that any parliament can undertake. But it does offer, on the basis of the analysis developed across the preceding twelve parts, a clear, defensible, and practically implementable legislative vision for Bangladesh's defense governance.

CHAPTER ONE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

1.1 Constitutional Moments in Democratic Theory

The concept of a constitutional moment, developed most influentially by the American constitutional scholar Bruce Ackerman, refers to a period in a democracy's political life during which extraordinary political mobilization creates the conditions for fundamental constitutional change outside or alongside the ordinary mechanisms of constitutional amendment. Ackerman's original analysis focused on three such moments in American history: the founding, the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, and the New Deal of the 1930s. In each case, a combination of political crisis, mass mobilization, and institutional leadership produced changes to the constitutional order that were qualitatively different from ordinary legislative or even constitutional revision.

The concept translates meaningfully, though imperfectly, to Bangladesh's situation in 2024 to 2026. The July Revolution of 2024 was not merely a change of government. It was a genuine mass mobilization, led initially by students and expanding to encompass broad sections of Bangladeshi society, that delegitimized not only the Hasina government but the entire accumulated institutional deformation that fifteen years of authoritarian rule had produced. The DGFI's use as a political instrument, the RAB's extrajudicial killings, the weaponization of the Digital Security Act against critics, the subordination of the judiciary to executive preference, the corruption of the police and prosecution services, and the systematic hollowing out of parliamentary oversight: all of these accumulated pathologies were simultaneously exposed and repudiated.

The combination of Bangladesh's first-past-the-post voting system, a unicameral legislature based on the Westminster model, huge authority vested in the government-appointed chief justice, and constitutional restrictions on lawmakers opposing their own party had created an environment in which the prime minister wielded nearly all powers. International Crisis Group

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The reform agenda that emerged after July 2024 focused precisely on correcting this concentration: on strengthening checks and balances, building up parliamentary and judicial prerogatives, and creating institutional mechanisms that would make a future slide into authoritarianism structurally more difficult.

For defense governance specifically, the constitutional moment creates a particular opportunity. Defense has historically been one of the most insulated domains of Bangladesh's governance structure. Military budgets have been approved without detailed parliamentary scrutiny. Intelligence agencies have operated without statutory charters. Defense procurement has occurred through processes opaque to democratic accountability. The Army Act, Navy Act, and Air Force Act, all inherited from the colonial period with minimal amendment, have never been comprehensively revised. No national defense white paper has ever been published. No national security council legislation has established clear lines of authority and accountability for decisions about war, peace, and the use of force.

The interim government committed to holding free and fair elections after repairing the security sector, the justice system, and other core institutions. It also said that it would bring legislative changes through presidential order, which would later be ratified by an elected parliament. While embarking on these critical steps, the interim government was contending with powerful and politicized security forces that had long benefited from a system of impunity. Human Rights Watch

This dynamic, the tension between reform ambition and institutional resistance from security forces accustomed to autonomy, is precisely what makes defense legislation both necessary and difficult. Part Thirteen addresses this tension directly, offering both a vision of what must be achieved and an honest assessment of the obstacles that stand in the way.

1.2 The February 2026 Elections and the National Referendum: A New Constitutional Foundation

The February 2026 parliamentary elections and the concurrent national referendum on constitutional reforms represent, together, the most significant institutional event in Bangladesh's post-independence history. The referendum was conducted alongside the parliamentary elections, presenting voters with a yes-or-no choice on whether to approve a proposed package of reforms, including reforms affecting the balance of powers among the executive, legislative, and constitutional bodies. International Foundation for Electoral Systems

For defense governance, the referendum package matters in several respects. The proposed constitutional reforms, if approved, would strengthen parliamentary prerogatives in ways that create, for the first time, a constitutional basis for genuine legislative oversight of the security sector. They would also establish or reinforce judicial independence in ways that make judicial review of executive security decisions more credible. And they would create constitutional bases for institutional bodies, including potentially a strengthened national security council structure, that have previously operated on an entirely ad hoc basis.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The new parliament that took office following the February 2026 elections faces an extraordinary legislative agenda. Bangladesh experienced major changes to its legal framework through ordinances in 2025, with the President promulgating seventy-eight ordinances across a wide range of areas, most of them as part of the ongoing reform process. The Daily Star Many of these ordinances will need to be reviewed, ratified, amended, or replaced by proper parliamentary legislation. Within this already crowded agenda, defense legislation competes for attention with criminal procedure reform, civil procedure reform, labor law reform, electoral law reform, and numerous other urgent priorities.

The political science literature on legislative reform in post-transition democracies consistently identifies a core challenge: the window of opportunity created by a constitutional moment is limited. As political life normalizes, vested interests reassert themselves, attention moves to more immediate political controversies, and the appetite for fundamental institutional reform declines. Bangladesh's experience confirms this pattern. The momentum generated by the July Revolution must be channeled into concrete legislative action before it dissipates. For defense governance, this means that the new parliament must prioritize defense legislation in its first term, even though the immediate political incentives for doing so are relatively weak compared to more electorally salient issues like economic policy, corruption prosecution, or social welfare.

1.3 The Inherited Legislative Framework and Its Deficiencies

To understand what must be reformed, one must first understand what exists. Bangladesh's current legislative framework for defense governance is a palimpsest: layers of colonial-era law modified by periodic amendments and supplemented by presidential orders, executive decrees, and administrative instructions, accumulated without any systematic architectural vision. The result is a framework that is simultaneously too rigid in some dimensions and too permissive in others, that assigns responsibilities without creating accountability mechanisms, and that leaves fundamental questions of authority and oversight either unresolved or resolved in ways inconsistent with democratic governance.

The foundational documents are the Army Act of 1952, the Navy Ordinance of 1961, and the Air Force Act of 1953, all of which were inherited from the colonial and Pakistani periods and applied in Bangladesh with minimal modification. These instruments govern military justice, discipline, and internal organization within each service, but they do not address the fundamental questions of democratic defense governance: the relationship between the armed forces and the elected government, the authority of parliament over defense decisions, the oversight of intelligence agencies, the regulation of defense procurement, or the conditions under which force may be lawfully used.

The Bangladesh Constitution addresses defense in several provisions, most notably in Article 61, which vests the Supreme Command of the defense services in the President, and in Article 46, which allows parliament to indemnify actions taken in connection with national security. But these provisions do not constitute a defense governance framework. They are a skeletal outline that leaves almost everything substantive to be determined by ordinary legislation, executive policy, or military custom. The failure to enact comprehensive legislation filling this skeletal outline is among the most consequential institutional failures of the post-independence period.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The RAB Act, various intelligence service regulations, the Special Powers Act, and other security-related legislation represent additional pieces of a fragmented puzzle, but they do not add up to a coherent system. Intelligence agencies in particular operate in a legal limbo: their existence is acknowledged, their powers exercised vigorously, but their statutory authority, accountability mechanisms, and operational boundaries remain undefined or defined only in classified instruments inaccessible to democratic scrutiny.

The recent students-people's uprising triggered a national reckoning not only within Bangladesh's political institutions but also in how the country envisions its defense priorities, with scholars arguing for a more inclusive, people-centered, and adaptive approach to defense planning that emphasizes reassessing existing military capabilities, recalibrating foreign partnerships, and aligning defense strategies with democratic values. SSRN

This call for alignment between defense strategy and democratic values is not merely aspirational rhetoric. It points to a concrete legislative requirement: Bangladesh needs laws that make democratic values constitutionally enforceable in the defense domain, not merely proclaimed in political speeches. The remainder of this chapter, and the chapters that follow, specify what those laws should look like and how they should be designed.

1.4 The Jurisprudential Foundations of Defense Legislation

Before turning to the specifics of legislative design, this analysis requires a moment of jurisprudential grounding. The question of what law should govern the military and defense sector is not merely a technical question of institutional design. It is a philosophical question about the relationship between organized force, political authority, and individual rights in a democratic society.

The natural law tradition, as explored in Chapter Six of Part One of this textbook, holds that certain fundamental principles of justice are prior to positive law and constitute the standard by which positive law is evaluated. From a natural law perspective, legislation governing defense must be assessed not merely by whether it conforms to formal constitutional requirements but by whether it advances or violates fundamental principles of human dignity, proportionality, and legitimate authority. The just war tradition's requirements of legitimate authority, just cause, right intention, proportionality, and last resort, translated into the secular language of contemporary international law, provide the normative framework within which defense legislation must operate.

Legal positivism, by contrast, focuses on the formal validity of law: a rule is law if it is enacted by the appropriate authority through the appropriate procedure. From a positivist perspective, the primary requirement for defense legislation is that it be formally valid: enacted by parliament, consistent with the constitution, and properly promulgated. The substantive content is a matter for the political process, not for jurisprudential evaluation.

Critical legal studies, developed primarily in American law schools in the 1970s and 1980s and now a significant global jurisprudential tradition, challenges both natural law and positivism by exposing the ways in which apparently neutral legal rules serve the interests of powerful actors

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and legitimate existing distributions of power. Applied to defense legislation, a critical legal studies perspective would ask: whose interests does this legislation actually serve? Does it genuinely constrain military power, or does it provide a veneer of democratic legitimacy while leaving military autonomy substantively intact? Does it give genuine voice to the communities most affected by security operations, including the poor, minorities, and women, or does it serve primarily the organizational interests of the armed forces and the security establishment?

Islamic jurisprudence, explored in Part One Chapter Six, adds another dimension of relevance in Bangladesh's specifically Muslim-majority context. The concept of maslaha, or public interest, which various schools of Islamic jurisprudence employ to justify departing from strictly literal textual interpretation in order to serve the genuine welfare of the community, provides an Islamic legal foundation for the kind of pragmatic, needs-based reform approach that this chapter advocates. The requirement in Islamic jurisprudence that rulers be accountable to the community and that their exercise of power conform to principles of justice and consultation resonates directly with the democratic accountability requirements that modern defense legislation must embody.

The synthesis that Part Thirteen adopts draws from all four of these traditions: from natural law, the substantive normative standards to which defense legislation must conform; from positivism, the formal validity requirements and the importance of clear, enforceable rules; from critical legal studies, the commitment to ensuring that legislation genuinely constrains power rather than merely legitimizing it; and from Islamic jurisprudence, the grounding in principles of public interest, accountability, and consultation appropriate to Bangladesh's cultural and religious context.

CHAPTER TWO: THE ANATOMY OF LEGISLATIVE FAILURE: A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS

2.1 Why Good Defense Legislation Is Difficult

Before designing new legislation, a serious analysis must honestly confront why the existing legislative framework is deficient despite the best intentions of many of the people who created it. Legislative failure in the defense domain is not unique to Bangladesh. It is a global pattern with identifiable causes, and understanding those causes is essential to designing reforms that avoid repeating the same mistakes.

The first and most fundamental cause of defense legislative failure is what political scientists call the problem of information asymmetry. The armed forces and intelligence agencies possess vastly more information about threats, capabilities, and operational requirements than any legislature can acquire. This information asymmetry gives military institutions enormous leverage in legislative processes: they can credibly claim that proposed accountability measures will compromise operational security, that disclosure requirements will expose sources and methods, that civilian oversight will slow decision-making in ways that endanger lives. These

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

claims are not always wrong. But they are often exaggerated, and they are structurally self-serving. Designing legislative oversight mechanisms that take operational security seriously without being defeated by it is one of the central challenges of defense legislation.

The second cause is organizational self-interest. The armed forces, like all large bureaucratic organizations, have powerful institutional interests in preserving their autonomy, their budgets, and their prerogatives. Civil-military relations theory, from Huntington and Janowitz through the more recent work of Feaver, Desch, and Biddle, consistently identifies the tendency of military organizations to resist civilian oversight not necessarily from bad faith but from the genuine belief that military professionals are better positioned to make military decisions than civilian politicians. This organizational culture of professional self-sufficiency is an obstacle to legislative reform even in the best-governed democracies.

The third cause is the weakness of the institutions that should drive reform. Parliamentary defense committees require expertise, access to classified information, and institutional support to perform effective oversight. In Bangladesh, as Part Three of this textbook documented in detail, the parliamentary committee on defense has historically lacked all three: the members lack expertise in defense matters, the committee has no access to classified operational information, and its secretariat is underresourced and understaffed. Designing new defense legislation without simultaneously strengthening the parliamentary capacity to oversee that legislation is an exercise in futility.

The fourth cause is political economy. Defense expenditure represents significant flows of money, patronage, and organizational resources. Procurement contracts create economic interests. Promotions and appointments create political dependencies. The defense sector, precisely because it operates with less transparency than other sectors of government, offers exceptional opportunities for the kind of rent-seeking behavior that political scientists study under the heading of corruption. Designing legislation that reduces these opportunities will generate political resistance from those who benefit from the current system, including, in Bangladesh's case, influential figures both within and adjacent to the military establishment.

2.2 The Specific Failures of Bangladesh's Legislative Framework

Against this general backdrop of why defense legislation fails, Bangladesh's specific situation involves several additional, nationally specific pathologies that any serious reform agenda must diagnose and address.

The first pathology is the absence of a comprehensive defense act that consolidates, rationalizes, and modernizes the foundational legal framework. As noted above, the Army Act, Navy Ordinance, and Air Force Act are colonial instruments applied in a post-colonial context. They were designed to govern the armed forces of a colonial power that did not regard the consent of the governed as a relevant consideration. They contain no provisions for parliamentary oversight, no accountability mechanisms for the use of force against civilians, no whistleblower protections for military personnel who report abuses, and no mechanism for civilian judicial review of military decisions that affect fundamental rights. They are, in a word, constitutionally

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

incompatible with a democratic republic, and they have remained on the statute books for over fifty years through sheer legislative inertia.

The second pathology is the intelligence agencies' complete absence of statutory foundation. The Directorate General of Forces Intelligence operates without any legislation defining its powers, establishing its accountability mechanisms, or specifying the conditions under which it may conduct surveillance of citizens, infiltrate organizations, or share information with foreign intelligence services. The National Security Intelligence operates similarly. This legal vacuum is not an oversight: it is a deliberate institutional choice that has consistently served the interests of whoever controls those agencies, whether civilian or military governments, by insulating their activities from legal challenge. The result, as documented extensively in Part Nine of this textbook, is a pattern of institutional abuse unchecked by any legal constraint.

The third pathology is the absence of any legislative framework for national security decision-making at the highest level. Who decides when Bangladesh goes to war? Who authorizes the deployment of forces beyond Bangladesh's borders? Who oversees the development and revision of defense policy? Who is responsible for the coordination of the military, intelligence, law enforcement, and diplomatic dimensions of national security? These questions are currently answered, if at all, through informal conventions and executive discretion rather than through legally specified processes. This absence of process creates vulnerabilities: it allows defense decisions to be made by individuals without accountability to parliament or the public, and it makes the quality of those decisions dependent on the personal qualities of the individuals making them rather than on institutional processes designed to produce good decisions consistently.

The fourth pathology is the procurement system's opacity and its susceptibility to corruption. Defense procurement in Bangladesh has historically occurred through processes that are opaque to parliamentary scrutiny, inadequately governed by legal rules, and persistently vulnerable to corrupt manipulation. Current defense procurement laws limit private participation, with officials recommending new legislation and clear investment procedures to attract investors. To guide the development of the defense industry, two high-level committees have been formed: the Defense Industry Policy Implementation Committee, responsible for drafting and executing the national defense industry policy, and the Bangladesh National Defense Industry Development Coordination Council, which supervises overall progress. Defencejournalbd The formation of these committees acknowledges the problem without yet solving it: committees that operate without statutory authorization, public accountability, or clear legal mandates cannot substitute for genuine legislative reform of the procurement system.

2.3 The Political Economy of Reform Resistance

Understanding who benefits from the current system is essential to understanding why reform is difficult and what political strategy is required to achieve it. The existing legislative vacuum in defense governance is not neutral: it actively serves the interests of specific actors, and those actors will resist reform with determination.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Within the armed forces, the most significant resistance will come from senior officers who have become accustomed to operating in a legislative vacuum. A comprehensive defense act that specifies the conditions under which military force may be used against civilians, that establishes accountability mechanisms for extrajudicial killings, that requires the publication of defense planning documents, and that subjects defense procurement to genuine oversight represents a direct challenge to the institutional autonomy that senior military leadership regards as a professional right.

Within the intelligence community, resistance to statutory codification is, if anything, even more intense. Intelligence agencies everywhere are institutional actors with a structural preference for secrecy, and Bangladesh's intelligence agencies have operated under conditions of extreme secrecy for their entire existence. The prospect of statutory definition of their powers, parliamentary oversight of their operations, and judicial review of their most sensitive decisions is genuinely threatening to an institutional culture built on the assumption that intelligence work by definition transcends normal legal constraints.

Within the executive, any prime ministerial administration will find in the existing legislative vacuum a source of personal power. The ability to direct intelligence agencies without statutory constraint, to authorize military operations without parliamentary approval, and to manage defense procurement without transparent competitive processes are all assets that executive power is reluctant to surrender. The current reform moment provides the rare situation in which the executive, in the form of the interim government and now the new parliament, is genuinely motivated to reduce its own future power by creating constraints it cannot later easily remove. But this motivation is fragile and contingent, and may not survive the return of normal competitive politics.

The political strategy for reform must therefore be designed to build as broad a coalition as possible before political calculus changes. This means engaging civil society, academic institutions, the legal profession, the business community concerned about the costs of military corruption, and international partners including multilateral institutions and donor governments who have made security sector reform a condition of their assistance programs. It also means finding, within the armed forces themselves, the officers who understand that transparent, accountable, and well-resourced armed forces are ultimately more capable and more respected than armed forces that derive their position from political patronage and institutional opacity.

CHAPTER THREE: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT: CONCEPT, PRECEDENTS, AND PRINCIPLES

3.1 The Concept of a Foundational Defense Statute

The centerpiece of Part Thirteen's legislative reform agenda is the proposal for a National Defense Act for Bangladesh: a comprehensive, foundational statute that consolidates, rationalizes, and modernizes the entire legislative framework governing the defense sector. Such

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

a statute does not merely amend existing laws; it replaces the existing fragmentary framework with a coherent, architecturally unified legal instrument that embodies the principles of democratic governance, establishes clear lines of authority and accountability, and provides the legal foundation for all subsequent defense policy decisions.

The concept of a foundational defense statute is not new. Multiple democracies have enacted such legislation at critical moments in their institutional development, and the comparative experience provides both models and cautionary tales that Bangladesh's legislative architects must carefully study.

The United States National Security Act of 1947 is the most influential example of this genre. Enacted in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, the Act created the Department of Defense (replacing the separate War and Navy Departments), established the Joint Chiefs of Staff, created the CIA, and established the National Security Council as the principal forum for coordinating defense and foreign policy at the highest level. The Act did not attempt to regulate every aspect of defense governance; it focused on the highest-level architecture of national security decision-making, leaving the details of organizational structure, procurement processes, and operational doctrine to subsequent executive action. But it established the constitutional and institutional foundations without which coherent defense governance was impossible.

The United Kingdom's Defence Reform Act of 2014 provides a more recent comparative model, though in a very different constitutional context. The Act reformed the procurement system, creating a single defense equipment plan and establishing governance mechanisms for major contracts. It also restructured the Ministry of Defence's relationship with the armed services in ways that gave civilian leadership more direct control over defense resources. The UK experience illustrates both the potential and the limits of procurement-focused legislative reform: the Defense Equipment Plan has improved some dimensions of procurement governance, but the fundamental pathologies of British defense procurement, cost overruns, delayed delivery, and contracts structured to benefit major defense contractors at the expense of the public, have not been eliminated.

South Korea's National Defense Reform Act, first enacted in 2006 and substantially revised in subsequent years, provides the most directly relevant model for Bangladesh. South Korea faced challenges analogous to Bangladesh's: a military that had wielded direct political power, a procurement system with deep structural corruption, and a civilian government seeking to establish genuine democratic control over an armed forces whose institutional culture had been formed during decades of military rule. The Korean Act established civilian-led defense planning processes, created parliamentary oversight mechanisms with genuine teeth, reformed the procurement system with new transparency and accountability requirements, and established civilian positions within the defense ministry to provide expert civilian counterparts to the military staff. The Korean experience is not uniformly positive: reform implementation has been contested and incomplete. But it demonstrates that comprehensive legislative reform of defense governance is achievable even in a political environment where military institutional resistance is powerful.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Germany's parliamentary participation requirement (Parlamentsbeteiligungsgesetz), enacted in 2005 and examined briefly in Part Twelve of this textbook, provides a specifically legislative model for one of the most critical dimensions of democratic defense governance: the requirement that the Bundestag approve the deployment of German forces in operations involving potential armed conflict. The German approach establishes a tiered system: routine training and capacity-building deployments require only notification of parliament, while deployments with a realistic potential for combat require parliamentary approval, and deployments explicitly authorized under the law of armed conflict require approval by a specific majority. This tiered approach balances operational flexibility with democratic accountability and has been tested in multiple real-world deployment decisions over twenty years of operation.

3.2 Principles for Bangladesh's National Defense Act

Drawing on the comparative experience and on the analysis developed across the preceding twelve parts, this section articulates the foundational principles that should govern the design of Bangladesh's National Defense Act.

The first principle is constitutional supremacy. The Act must explicitly affirm and embody the principle that the armed forces of Bangladesh exist to serve the constitutional purposes of the state, are subject to the authority of the democratically elected government, and operate within the framework of the Constitution and the law. This sounds obvious, but it is not: Bangladesh's existing legislative framework contains no provision explicitly affirming civilian supremacy over the military. The Army Act, Navy Ordinance, and Air Force Act establish chains of command within the military and define the relationship between the military and the executive, but they do not establish the relationship between the military and the legislature or the judiciary, and they do not explicitly affirm the principle of democratic civilian control.

The second principle is parliamentary primacy in decisions of war and peace. The decision to commit Bangladesh's armed forces to armed conflict, whether defensive or offensive, whether within Bangladesh's territory or beyond it, must require parliamentary authorization except in cases of immediate armed attack where there is no time for prior authorization. This principle, embodied in the German parliamentary participation law and approximated in various forms in the UK, Japan, and the Nordic countries, is the most consequential single structural reform that Bangladesh's defense governance requires. It transforms war-making from a prerogative of the executive into a constitutional responsibility shared with the legislature, creating both a check on executive rashness and a mechanism for democratic legitimization of the most consequential uses of state power.

The third principle is transparency and public accountability. The Act must establish requirements for the publication of defense planning documents, including defense policy white papers, force structure plans, and capability roadmaps. It must require that defense budget proposals submitted to parliament include sufficient detail to permit meaningful legislative review. It must establish freedom of information principles applicable to the defense sector, with exceptions for information whose disclosure would genuinely compromise operational security or intelligence sources and methods. And it must create mechanisms for civil society engagement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

in defense policy development, including provisions for public consultation on major defense policy revisions.

The fourth principle is institutional separation and independence. The Act must clearly delineate the respective roles and authorities of the Ministry of Defense, the armed forces chiefs of staff, the Armed Forces Division, and the National Security Council structure, avoiding the overlapping jurisdictions and ambiguous authorities that currently characterize Bangladesh's defense governance architecture. It must establish that the Ministry of Defense is led by a civilian minister accountable to parliament, and that the minister's authority over the armed forces in policy and resource matters is clear and legally enforceable.

The fifth principle is accountability for the use of force. The Act must establish clear legal standards for the use of lethal force by members of the armed forces, both in combat operations and in internal security operations, and must create institutional mechanisms for investigating violations of those standards and holding responsible parties to account. This is perhaps the most politically sensitive dimension of the reform agenda, because it directly challenges the culture of impunity that has historically protected military personnel from accountability for killings, disappearances, and other abuses committed in the course of security operations.

The sixth principle is procurement integrity. The Act must reform the defense procurement system to ensure competitive tendering for major contracts, independent technical evaluation, parliamentary oversight of contracts above a specified threshold, and audit mechanisms with genuine investigative authority. The international experience reviewed in Part Ten of this textbook, from the Swedish FMV model to the South Korean Defense Acquisition Program Administration, provides concrete models for institutional design.

The seventh principle is proportionality and necessity. The Act must embed the proportionality and necessity requirements of international humanitarian law into domestic law, making clear that these principles govern not only combat operations against external adversaries but also internal security operations against domestic threats. This constitutional embedding of proportionality is essential to preventing the kind of disproportionate force that Bangladesh's security services have historically deployed against political dissidents, journalists, and minority communities.

3.3 The Architecture of the National Defense Act: A Structural Overview

The National Defense Act proposed in this chapter is a comprehensive statute of approximately fifteen parts, each addressing a distinct dimension of defense governance. The following structural overview is developed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, each of which provides model legislative language and analysis of design choices.

Part One of the proposed Act establishes foundational principles: the constitutional status of the armed forces, the principle of civilian democratic control, the relationship between domestic law and international law, and the definitions applicable throughout the Act.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Two establishes the National Security Council: its membership, its mandate, its decision-making procedures, and its accountability mechanisms. It also addresses the relationship between the NSC and the cabinet, and between the NSC and the parliamentary defense committee.

Part Three governs the Ministry of Defense: its organizational structure, the civilian minister's authority, the role of the defense secretary, and the relationship between the ministry and the armed forces headquarters.

Part Four addresses the three military services: the command authority of the army, navy, and air force chiefs; their relationship to the minister and the president; and the coordination mechanisms of the joint staff.

Part Five governs the deployment of armed forces: the distinction between peacetime operations, internal security operations, and combat deployments; the parliamentary authorization requirements; and the conditions under which emergency deployments may proceed without prior authorization.

Part Six establishes the defense planning framework: the requirement for a defense policy white paper, the force structure planning process, the capability-based planning methodology, and the relationship between defense planning and the budget cycle.

Part Seven governs defense procurement: the competitive tendering requirements, the independent evaluation mechanisms, the parliamentary oversight threshold, the audit arrangements, and the anti-corruption provisions.

Part Eight establishes the military justice framework: the rights of military personnel, the independence of military courts, the relationship between military and civilian judicial processes, and the accountability mechanisms for abuses of authority.

Part Nine establishes the intelligence oversight framework: the statutory basis for intelligence activities, the parliamentary intelligence committee, the judicial warrant requirements for intrusive surveillance, and the independent oversight commissioner.

Part Ten addresses defense industry policy: the framework for indigenous production, the Defense Economic Zone governance, the technology transfer regulations, and the export control provisions.

Part Eleven governs Bangladesh's participation in United Nations and other multilateral operations, incorporating the Peacekeeping Participation Act framework developed in Part Twelve of this textbook.

Part Twelve addresses cyber security and information warfare: the national cyber defense architecture, the roles and responsibilities of the cyber command, and the legal framework for offensive cyber operations.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Thirteen establishes personnel management provisions: the recruitment, promotion, and retirement systems for military officers; the anti-discrimination provisions; and the rights and responsibilities of military personnel in their relations with civil society.

Part Fourteen provides transitional provisions: the timeline for implementation, the fate of existing legislation, and the mechanisms for the orderly transfer of authority from the existing framework to the new one.

Part Fifteen establishes review and amendment mechanisms: the requirement for a five-year legislative review, the process for emergency amendments, and the role of a standing defense law commission in monitoring implementation and recommending revisions.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL LEGISLATION

4.1 The Constitutional and Legal Status of the National Security Council

Bangladesh currently lacks any statutory framework for its highest-level national security decision-making body. The National Security Council exists and meets, but its composition, mandate, decision-making procedures, and accountability are governed by executive order and convention rather than by law. This creates a structural vulnerability that has been repeatedly exploited: when an executive wishes to make a defense or security decision without the constraints that institutional process would impose, it simply convenes a different group of advisors, or makes the decision informally, without the NSC framework that should provide coordination, deliberation, and accountability.

The case for legislation establishing the NSC on a statutory basis is compelling. First, statutory establishment makes the NSC's existence independent of executive discretion: it cannot be abolished or bypassed by presidential order. Second, statutory specification of the NSC's membership eliminates the ambiguity about who has the right to participate in and be informed about the most sensitive security decisions. Third, statutory specification of the NSC's mandate creates a basis for parliamentary oversight of whether the NSC is performing its constitutional function. Fourth, a statutory NSC creates the legal framework for defining classified information and the security clearance system, which currently operates without any legislative basis.

The comparative experience is instructive. The United States NSC, established by the National Security Act of 1947, has statutory members (the president, vice president, secretary of state, and secretary of defense) and statutory advisors (the chairman of the joint chiefs and the director of national intelligence). All others who participate in NSC meetings do so at the president's discretion. This clear statutory specification has proven durable: across seventy-five years and fourteen presidents, the NSC's basic statutory framework has remained intact even as the organizational culture and actual practice of NSC decision-making have varied enormously.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Indian model, established under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 1998 in response to the Pokhran nuclear tests and the strategic shock of the Kargil War, created a more elaborate structure: the Cabinet Committee on Security at the apex, supported by the NSC Secretariat and the National Security Advisory Board, with the National Security Advisor serving as the coordinator. India's NSC structure lacks explicit statutory grounding, operating instead on the basis of cabinet orders, but it has proven institutionally resilient, surviving multiple changes of government. For Bangladesh, which faces more acute civil-military relations challenges than India, statutory grounding is more important: convention alone cannot be relied upon to constrain a military institution accustomed to operating outside constitutional norms.

4.2 Model Legislation: The National Security Council Act

The following represents the key provisions of a model National Security Council Act for Bangladesh, with analysis of design choices and comparative precedents.

Section 1 should establish the NSC as a statutory body, define its constitutional purpose as the principal forum for advising the President and the government on matters of national security, and affirm its accountability to the cabinet and, through the cabinet, to parliament.

Section 2 should specify the NSC's membership. The core membership should include the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Home Affairs. The chiefs of the three armed services and the Director General of National Security Intelligence should be statutory advisors. Additional members may be designated by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, subject to notification of the parliamentary defense committee.

This membership specification embodies important choices. Including the President as a statutory member affirms the President's constitutional role as Supreme Commander of the armed forces. Including the three service chiefs as advisors rather than members reflects the principle of civilian supremacy: the military chiefs advise rather than decide, and their participation is as professional advisors rather than as political decision-makers. Including the Director of National Intelligence as a statutory advisor rather than a voting member reflects the principle that intelligence should inform rather than determine policy.

Section 3 should specify the NSC's mandate: to coordinate the development of national security strategy, to advise on the use of the armed forces in defense of the state, to coordinate the defense and foreign policy dimensions of national security, to oversee the national intelligence architecture, and to coordinate the government's response to national security emergencies.

Section 4 should establish the NSC Secretariat as a statutory body under the direction of the National Security Advisor. The National Security Advisor should be a civilian appointee of the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, with a fixed five-year term to provide continuity across political transitions.

Section 5 should establish the relationship between the NSC and parliament. The Prime Minister should be required to brief the parliamentary defense committee on NSC decisions at least

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

quarterly, and to obtain parliamentary authorization before implementing any NSC decision that commits the armed forces to operations involving potential armed conflict, except as provided in the emergency deployment provisions of the National Defense Act.

Section 6 should establish security classification rules for NSC documents: a statutory classification system, an independent Classification Review Board, and a mandatory declassification schedule ensuring that NSC records are released to the public after a specified period, with exceptions for information that remains sensitive.

4.3 The National Security Advisor: Role, Appointment, and Accountability

The position of National Security Advisor is one of the most consequential in any government's security architecture, and its design requires careful attention. In Bangladesh's specific context, several design considerations are particularly important.

First, the NSA must be a civilian. Bangladesh's history of military political involvement makes it essential that the coordinator of the highest-level security decision-making process be clearly a civilian appointee, subject to the authority of the elected government and accountable to civilian political processes rather than to military chains of command.

Second, the NSA must have genuine expertise. The position should require a minimum qualification, whether academic credentials in security studies, international relations, or law, or substantial prior service in senior positions within the foreign ministry, defense ministry, or intelligence community. The current practice of appointing political loyalists without security expertise to senior advisory positions has consistently degraded the quality of security decision-making.

Third, the NSA must have institutional independence. A fixed term of office, removal only for cause through a specified process, and a statutory salary set independently of executive discretion all contribute to the NSA's ability to provide honest professional advice without fear of political retaliation. The permanent tension between political loyalty and professional honesty that characterizes advisory positions in any government is best managed by structural protections that reduce the NSA's dependence on the patronage of whoever holds executive power.

Fourth, the NSA must be accountable to parliament. The NSA should be required to testify before the parliamentary defense committee at least twice yearly, to provide an annual report on the national security environment and the NSC's activities, and to respond to specific parliamentary inquiries about NSC decision-making processes, subject to appropriate classification constraints.

4.4 The NSC and Civil-Military Relations: The Critical Interface

The NSC structure is, among other things, a mechanism for managing the most critical interface in Bangladesh's defense governance: the relationship between elected civilian leadership and the professional military. As Part Five of this textbook analyzed in depth, Bangladesh's civil-military relations have been systematically distorted by decades of military political intervention, by the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

institutional culture of the DGFI and other intelligence services, and by the lack of any formal civilian counterpart expertise to challenge military professional judgment.

The NSC, properly designed, creates a structured forum in which civilian and military perspectives are both heard and both subject to the discipline of a formal decision-making process. The military chiefs present as statutory advisors, not as members with voting authority. This structural positioning reflects the principle of democratic civilian control without insulting the professional status of the military leadership or excluding their professional judgment from the decision-making process.

The design of the NSC meeting process matters as much as its membership. NSC decisions should be recorded in formal minutes, prepared by the NSA's secretariat, reviewed and approved by all participants, and classified at an appropriate level. This documentation requirement creates institutional accountability and prevents the revisionist interpretation of decisions that has characterized some of the most problematic episodes in Bangladesh's security history, where after-the-fact disputes about who authorized what operation have been impossible to resolve because no contemporaneous record was kept.

The NSC should also establish a standing sub-committee on civil-military relations, composed of the civilian members of the NSC and appropriate senior officials from the defense ministry, charged with monitoring the implementation of civil-military relations reform, identifying emerging tensions, and recommending corrective action before problems escalate. This sub-committee would be the institutional embodiment of the principle that managing the civil-military relationship is not a crisis management activity but a continuous governance responsibility.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE COMMITTEE: POWERS, PROCEDURES, AND REFORM

5.1 The Current State of Parliamentary Defense Oversight

The parliamentary defense committee, in whatever form it has existed across Bangladesh's various constitutional periods, has consistently been one of the weakest elements of the country's governance architecture. As documented in Part Three of this textbook, the committee has lacked the expertise, the access to information, the institutional support, and the political willingness to exercise genuine oversight of the defense sector. It has rubber-stamped rather than scrutinized defense budgets, it has never successfully investigated a major procurement controversy, and it has been systematically excluded from access to the classified information that would make meaningful oversight possible.

The reform of the parliamentary defense committee is not merely a matter of changing rules within the committee itself. It requires a transformation of the institutional culture of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

parliamentary defense oversight, the statutory powers available to the committee, the resources provided to support its work, and the relationship between the committee and the institutions it oversees. This transformation is achievable, but it requires deliberate design and sustained political commitment.

The international experience offers models worth examining. Germany's Bundestag defense committee is the constitutionally mandated oversight body for the Bundeswehr, with powers to inspect military installations, compel the production of documents, and summon military and civilian officials to testify. The committee has a dedicated professional staff with security clearances that enable classified briefings, and it exercises genuine oversight over defense planning, procurement, and operations. The German model is not perfectly applicable to Bangladesh's parliamentary tradition, but the principle that effective oversight requires expert staff, secure information access, and genuine compellory powers is universally applicable.

Norway's parliamentary defense committee operates within a strong tradition of bipartisan defense consensus, in which defense policy is developed through processes that explicitly include opposition party participation. This approach, which reduces the partisan weaponization of defense oversight, is particularly relevant to Bangladesh, where the politicization of defense has historically been among the most corrosive elements of civil-military relations.

5.2 Legislative Reforms for the Parliamentary Defense Committee

The following legislative reforms are essential to the establishment of an effective parliamentary defense committee.

The first reform is a statutory basis for the committee's existence, powers, and procedures. The committee should not derive its powers solely from the standing orders of parliament, which can be amended by a simple majority without the procedural safeguards applicable to ordinary legislation. A statutory defense oversight committee act should specify the committee's composition, its mandate, its powers of compulsion, its access to classified information, its staffing requirements, and the reporting obligations of the executive and the armed forces to the committee.

The second reform is the security clearance system for committee members and staff. The most consequential failure of Bangladesh's parliamentary defense oversight has been the inability of parliamentarians to access classified information. Without classified access, oversight is confined to the surface of defense activity, unable to penetrate the classified world where the most consequential decisions are made. A statutory security clearance system, with defined eligibility requirements, a secure vetting process, and criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure, would create the framework within which classified briefings of the committee could safely occur.

The third reform is professional staff. The parliamentary defense committee should have a dedicated professional secretariat composed of individuals with relevant expertise in military affairs, intelligence, international law, defense economics, and procurement. These staffers should have the security clearances necessary to support the committee's work in classified domains, and they should have institutional independence from both the executive and the armed

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

forces. The model of dedicated, expert, security-cleared congressional staff employed by the United States Senate Armed Services Committee and House Armed Services Committee provides the most developed example of this approach.

The fourth reform is audit jurisdiction. The parliamentary defense committee should have statutory authority to direct the Comptroller and Auditor General to conduct performance audits of defense activities, including audits of classified procurement programs subject to appropriate security arrangements. The current limitation of audit jurisdiction to financial regularity auditing, rather than performance and value-for-money auditing, is a critical weakness in the accountability framework.

The fifth reform is the annual defense estimate hearing process. The committee should be required to hold public hearings on the defense budget estimates before their approval by the full parliament, receiving testimony from the Minister of Defense, the chiefs of the three services, and the Defense Secretary. These hearings should produce a public report that is debated in the full parliament before the budget is voted on. This process, standard in mature parliamentary democracies, transforms the defense budget from a rubber-stamp exercise into a genuine accountability mechanism.

5.3 The Oversight of Intelligence: The Parliamentary Intelligence Committee

Intelligence oversight deserves separate treatment from the general defense oversight framework, because the specific nature of intelligence work, its classification requirements, its source protection needs, and its operational sensitivity, requires a specialized oversight architecture.

The model most relevant to Bangladesh is the closed parliamentary intelligence committee, as exemplified by the UK's Intelligence and Security Committee, Norway's Parliamentary Committee for the Control of Intelligence and Security Services, and Germany's Parliamentary Control Panel. These committees operate entirely in closed session, with access to classified intelligence reporting, have statutory power to receive all documents and testimony they consider necessary, and publish annual reports in redacted form that provide public accountability without compromising operational security.

Bangladesh currently has no such body. The creation of a parliamentary intelligence oversight committee, with statutory powers, full classified access, independent expert staff, and a public reporting requirement, is among the most consequential single institutional reforms that can be made to Bangladesh's democratic defense governance. It directly addresses the most significant accountability gap in the current framework: the complete absence of democratic oversight of intelligence agencies whose operational reach, as Part Nine of this textbook documented, extends throughout Bangladeshi society.

The design of the intelligence oversight committee must address several specific challenges. The first is the tension between oversight effectiveness and information security. The committee must have sufficient access to classified information to provide genuine oversight, but the procedures for handling classified information within the committee must be robust enough to prevent unauthorized disclosure. The solution, employed by all effective intelligence oversight

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

committees, is a combination of strict security vetting of committee members and staff, secure physical facilities for classified discussions, and statutory criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure that create both legal deterrence and cultural norms of secrecy.

The second challenge is the tension between accountability and operational protection. The committee should have the authority to review ongoing intelligence operations, not merely historical ones. But review of ongoing operations creates the risk that the mere knowledge of an operation will affect its success. The solution is a notification requirement: intelligence agencies must notify the committee of significant ongoing operations, giving the committee the opportunity to raise concerns or objections, while preserving the agency's operational authority to make final decisions subject to the committee's monitoring role.

The third challenge is the relationship between the parliamentary intelligence committee and the courts. Intelligence agencies' activities are subject to judicial warrant requirements in many democracies, but the warrant process itself is often classified. Creating an appropriate relationship between parliamentary oversight and judicial oversight of intelligence, in which neither displaces the other but both provide complementary accountability, is one of the most sophisticated challenges of intelligence oversight design.

CHAPTER SIX: REFORMING THE MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM

6.1 The Philosophy of Military Justice in Democratic States

Military justice occupies a peculiar position in the legal systems of democratic states: it is simultaneously an expression of the rule of law and a potential exception to it. The arguments for a separate military justice system are well-established and genuinely weighty. Military personnel operate in conditions that civilian law was not designed to address: the obligation to obey orders, the requirements of military discipline, the operational needs of combat, and the organizational demands of a hierarchical fighting force all create legal questions that general civil and criminal law handles poorly. The principle that military personnel require a legal system calibrated to their specific professional circumstances is accepted across virtually all legal traditions.

But the arguments for a genuinely independent, rights-respecting military justice system are equally compelling. Military courts that are controlled by the chain of command are structurally incapable of holding senior officers accountable for abuse of subordinates, ordering for extrajudicial killings, or wrongful commands that violate international humanitarian law. The appearance of justice without its substance is worse than the transparent absence of justice, because it legitimizes abuse by giving it a procedural veneer.

The jurisprudential challenge of military justice is how to preserve the genuine military rationale for specialized justice while ensuring that the independence and procedural fairness necessary to genuine justice are not sacrificed on the altar of military convenience.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

6.2 Bangladesh's Military Justice Framework: Problems and Pathologies

Bangladesh's military justice framework, as currently constituted, embodies the worst features of the colonial military justice tradition and adds several pathologies of its own. The Army Act of 1952, the Navy Ordinance, and the Air Force Act, with their court martial procedures, their definition of offenses specific to military service, and their command-controlled judicial processes, were designed for an army serving imperial purposes, not for the armed forces of a democratic republic.

The most serious pathology is the absence of genuine judicial independence within the military justice system. Courts martial in Bangladesh are convened by commanders with authority over the accused, the judges are military officers who serve at the pleasure of their superiors, and the review process is conducted within the military chain of command. This structural arrangement makes it virtually impossible for a court martial to deliver a verdict unfavorable to the institutional interests of the senior military leadership.

The second pathology is the absence of meaningful civilian judicial oversight. In many democratic systems, including India and the United Kingdom, the judgments of military courts are subject to review by civilian courts, and the constitutional courts exercise jurisdiction over fundamental rights violations within the military justice system. In Bangladesh, the jurisdictional relationship between military courts and civilian courts is unclear in practice and has never been authoritatively resolved by the Supreme Court.

The third pathology is the persistent use of the military justice system for political purposes. The prosecution of military officers for alleged involvement in political opposition, the selective enforcement of discipline against officers whose loyalties are questioned, and the use of the threat of court martial to enforce political conformity within the armed forces are all well-documented features of Bangladesh's military institutional culture. A military justice system that is genuinely independent of the chain of command would be far more resistant to this kind of political manipulation.

6.3 The Military Justice Reform Act: Model Provisions

The proposed Military Justice Reform Act would fundamentally restructure Bangladesh's military justice system on the following principles.

First, the establishment of a civilian-led Military Court of Appeal, with judges appointed by the Judicial Service Commission rather than by the military chain of command, and with jurisdiction to review all courts martial proceedings on both procedural and substantive grounds. This court would not replace the court martial system but would provide an independent appellate review that the current system completely lacks.

Second, the codification of the rights of military accused in a Military Bill of Rights embedded within the Military Justice Reform Act: the right to counsel of one's choice, the right to a speedy trial, the right to confront witnesses, the right to remain silent without adverse inference, and the right to appeal. These rights parallel civilian criminal procedure rights and are mandated by

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's constitutional commitments and its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Third, the establishment of an independent Judge Advocate General's Department, whose members are legal professionals appointed through the Judicial Service Commission rather than through the military chain of command, and whose career advancement is independent of the military hierarchy they serve. The Judge Advocate General's officers would provide legal advice to courts martial panels, represent accused persons who cannot otherwise obtain counsel, and monitor compliance with the Military Justice Reform Act.

Fourth, the explicit extension of civilian criminal jurisdiction to members of the armed forces for all offenses committed against civilians, except where the offense occurs during an armed conflict and falls within the jurisdiction of international humanitarian law. The current practice of allowing the military justice system to handle cases in which military personnel kill or injure civilians in non-combat settings must be ended: these cases must be handled by the ordinary civilian criminal justice system, with its established procedural protections, its independent judiciary, and its public accountability.

Fifth, the establishment of a system for the reporting and investigation of torture and other cruel treatment of detainees by military personnel, with independent investigation conducted by civilian investigators under judicial supervision. The National Human Rights Commission should have statutory authority to investigate allegations of military abuse and to publish findings without the requirement of military cooperation, though it should seek military cooperation through formal channels before proceeding to independent investigation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: INTELLIGENCE REFORM LEGISLATION: STATUTES FOR THE SHADOWS

7.1 The Necessity and Difficulty of Intelligence Legislation

Intelligence legislation is among the most technically difficult and politically sensitive subjects that any parliament can address. The operational effectiveness of intelligence agencies depends on secrecy, and secrecy is fundamentally in tension with the transparency requirements of democratic governance. The people who know most about intelligence, the intelligence professionals themselves, have the strongest institutional interest in minimizing legal constraints on their work. And the threats that intelligence agencies are asked to counter are genuinely serious, creating political pressure to err on the side of granting intelligence agencies broad powers rather than constraining them with procedural requirements.

Yet the arguments for intelligence legislation are overwhelming. As Parts Nine and Eleven of this textbook documented in detail, Bangladesh's intelligence agencies have been systematically abused for political purposes. The DGFI's operations against political opponents of successive governments, the use of surveillance to monitor journalists and civil society activists, the practice

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

of enforced disappearance as an intelligence management tool: all of these abuses have been possible precisely because there is no statutory framework defining the agencies' powers and prohibiting their misuse.

The international experience is clear: democracies with statutory intelligence frameworks, robust oversight mechanisms, and judicial warrant requirements for intrusive surveillance have significantly lower rates of intelligence abuse than those without such frameworks. This is not a question of whether intelligence agencies will sometimes try to exceed their legal authority; they will, and they do, in every country. It is a question of whether legal and institutional constraints make abuse detectable, politically costly, and legally actionable, or whether the complete absence of legal framework renders abuse invisible, consequence-free, and therefore inevitable.

7.2 The Intelligence Services Act: Core Provisions

The proposed Intelligence Services Act would establish, for the first time, a statutory framework for Bangladesh's civilian and military intelligence agencies. Its core provisions are as follows.

Part One of the Act would establish the legal basis and mandate of each intelligence agency. The National Security Intelligence (NSI) would be established as the civilian foreign and counterintelligence service, responsible for intelligence collection from foreign sources and the identification of foreign threats to Bangladesh's security. The Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) would be established as the military intelligence service, responsible for intelligence collection and analysis in support of military operations and force protection, and explicitly prohibited from conducting domestic political surveillance or investigating civilian political activities. A new Domestic Intelligence Service (DIS) would be established as a separate agency, distinct from both the NSI and the DGFI, responsible for counterterrorism, counterespionage, and counter-subversion operations within Bangladesh's borders, with a specific statutory prohibition on political surveillance of lawful political activity.

The separation of military intelligence from domestic intelligence is particularly important for Bangladesh. The current commingling of DGFI's military intelligence function with its domestic political surveillance function has been the institutional source of some of the most serious intelligence abuses documented in Part Nine. A clear statutory mandate confining DGFI to military intelligence, combined with statutory prohibition on domestic political surveillance, would not eliminate the risk of DGFI overreach but would provide legal and institutional mechanisms for identifying and sanctioning it.

Part Two of the Act would establish a warrant system for intrusive intelligence collection. Interception of communications, physical surveillance of individuals in their private spaces, access to financial records, and infiltration of organizations would all require a judicial warrant issued by a designated Intelligence Warrant Judge, a position established within the Supreme Court for this purpose. The warrant application would specify the target, the methods proposed, the intelligence objective, and the duration requested. The judge would review the application in camera, without the knowledge of the target, but with the ability to decline the warrant or impose conditions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The judicial warrant system for intelligence collection is among the most important single reforms available to Bangladesh. It does not prevent intelligence collection; it channels it through a process that provides judicial oversight without operational compromise. Every major democracy with genuine rule of law, from the United States (where the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court performs this function) to Germany (where G10 Commission oversight applies to communications interception) to the United Kingdom (where Investigatory Powers Commissioners oversee the most sensitive surveillance activities), has adopted some version of this approach. Bangladesh's failure to do so has left its citizens without any legal protection against arbitrary surveillance.

Part Three would establish the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner, a position of statutory independence analogous to the Inspector General of Intelligence in the United States or the Investigatory Powers Commissioner in the United Kingdom. The Commissioner would have full access to the records and activities of all intelligence agencies, the power to inspect facilities and compel testimony, and the responsibility to report annually to parliament on the agencies' compliance with their statutory mandates. The Commissioner's annual report would be published, with necessary redactions, providing public accountability for the intelligence oversight process.

Part Four would establish employment protections for intelligence agency employees who in good faith report suspected violations of law to the Commissioner or to the parliamentary intelligence committee. The whistleblower protection provisions of the proposed Intelligence Services Act are essential to creating an internal accountability culture within agencies that by definition operate with very limited external scrutiny.

Part Five would establish criminal prohibitions applicable to intelligence activities conducted outside the statutory mandate: unauthorized surveillance, interference in lawful political activities, torture or cruel treatment of detainees, the provision of false intelligence assessments to the NSC or to parliament, and the disclosure of classified information for personal benefit or political advantage. These prohibitions, backed by significant criminal penalties, are the enforcement mechanism that gives the statutory framework its teeth.

7.3 The Controversial Question of Offensive Intelligence Operations

One of the most difficult questions in intelligence legislation is how to treat offensive intelligence operations: covert operations designed to affect events in foreign countries, including support for opposition movements, economic covert operations, disinformation campaigns, and, in extreme cases, operations involving physical violence against foreign targets.

For Bangladesh, this question has particular significance in the context of Myanmar. The collapse of Myanmar's central government authority, the Arakan Army's control of border regions, the continuing Rohingya crisis, and the flow of cross-border arms and militants creates situations in which Bangladesh's security interests might seem to justify offensive intelligence operations on Myanmarese territory. Similarly, the regional intelligence competition involving China, India, and the United States that plays out partly through Bangladesh creates pressures to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

develop offensive intelligence capabilities as a deterrent to foreign intelligence operations within Bangladesh's own borders.

The legislative framework should address offensive intelligence operations through a highly constrained authorization process. Any offensive intelligence operation against a foreign country or foreign nationals should require the personal authorization of the Prime Minister, the concurrence of the NSA and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and notification of the parliamentary intelligence committee chair within twenty-four hours of authorization. The operation should be subject to independent review by the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner within ninety days of commencement. This framework does not prohibit offensive intelligence operations but subjects them to the highest level of civilian political authorization and to post-hoc oversight accountability.

The philosophical justification for this constrained framework draws on both just war theory and the principle of proportionality. Offensive intelligence operations that may involve significant consequences for foreign nationals or for Bangladesh's international legal obligations are not merely operational decisions: they are political and moral decisions that must be made by those who bear democratic accountability for them.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEFENSE PROCUREMENT REFORM LEGISLATION

8.1 The Political Economy of Procurement Reform

Defense procurement reform is not primarily a technical problem. It is a political problem. The existing procurement system, whatever its technical deficiencies, generates significant flows of patronage, profit, and institutional advantage that benefit powerful actors within and adjacent to the military establishment. Reform of the procurement system threatens these flows and will be resisted by those who benefit from them with a determination that far exceeds their formal institutional position.

The comparative experience of procurement reform confirms this political economy analysis. Every major democratic procurement reform of the past quarter century, from the French procurement reorganization of the 1990s to the UK's Smart Acquisition initiative to South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration reform, has faced sustained resistance from established procurement networks, defense contractors, and military officers whose career advancement was tied to procurement decisions. In every case, the political sustainability of reform depended on creating alternative political coalitions, particularly from the civil society, business community, and parliamentary actors who benefit from a more transparent and competitive procurement system.

For Bangladesh, the political economy of procurement reform is additionally complicated by the involvement of Chinese state-owned defense enterprises in major procurement programs. As Part

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Ten of this textbook documented, the acquisition of Ming-class submarines, Type 053 frigates, Type 056 corvettes, MBT-2000 tanks, VT-5 light tanks, and other Chinese systems has been conducted through government-to-government agreements that bypass normal competitive tendering. While there may be legitimate strategic reasons for government-to-government procurement in some cases, particularly where security considerations make standard commercial competition inappropriate, the blanket exemption of Chinese arms purchases from competitive scrutiny has created precisely the conditions for the kind of rent-seeking behavior that comprehensive procurement legislation must eliminate.

On 3 February 2026, Bangladesh and Japan signed a formal agreement to facilitate the transfer of defense equipment and technology, establishing a legal framework governing the handling and transfer of military equipment between the two nations. Wikipedia This agreement, like the earlier framework agreements with Turkey and the United States, creates the legal architecture for defense technology cooperation but does not in itself resolve the procurement governance questions. The framework agreement tells us that technology may be transferred; it does not tell us how the decision to acquire specific systems through this framework will be made, who will evaluate competing offers, who will audit the terms of the final contract, or what parliamentary oversight will apply.

8.2 The Defense Procurement Act: Model Provisions

The proposed Defense Procurement Act would establish a comprehensive statutory framework for all defense acquisition activities above a de minimis threshold. Its key provisions are as follows.

Section 1 would establish the Defense Acquisition Authority (DAA) as an independent statutory body, separate from both the Ministry of Defense and the armed forces, modeled on South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration. The DAA would be responsible for managing all major defense procurement programs, from requirements definition through contract award through performance monitoring and contract close-out. The DAA's director would be a civilian appointee, confirmed by parliament, with a fixed term of office and removal only for cause.

The institutional separation of the DAA from the armed forces is among the most important single design choices in the procurement reform framework. When procurement decisions are made within military institutions by military officers, the conflict of interest between the officer's role as the purchaser of a system and the officer's career advancement, which may depend on the success of the program or the satisfaction of the contractor, is irresolvable. A separate civilian procurement authority eliminates this conflict of interest at the institutional level.

Section 2 would establish the competitive tendering requirements for all major procurement programs. Any contract above 50 crore BDT (approximately 4.5 million US dollars) would require open international competitive tendering, with a public announcement of requirements, a defined evaluation criteria, and a transparent award decision with a written justification published (with necessary security redactions) in the official gazette. Single-source procurement, including government-to-government agreements, would be permitted only for specified

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

categories of acquisition where competition is genuinely not feasible, and would require written approval from both the DAA director and the Minister of Defense with a specific finding that competition is not practicable.

Section 3 would establish an independent Technical Evaluation Board for major procurement programs, composed of civilian engineers and technical experts from government research institutions, public universities, and the private sector, supplemented by military technical advisors in an advisory capacity. The Board would evaluate competing offers against the published evaluation criteria and provide a written recommendation to the DAA director. The director would be required to follow the Board's recommendation unless there is a written justification for departure, which would be provided to the parliamentary defense committee.

Section 4 would establish the parliamentary oversight mechanism. All contracts above 500 crore BDT (approximately 45 million US dollars) would require notification to the parliamentary defense committee, with a thirty-day period during which the committee could request a classified briefing from the DAA and the ministry. Contracts above 2,000 crore BDT (approximately 180 million US dollars) would require parliamentary committee approval before execution. This threshold system follows the model of the UK's Major Projects Oversight mechanism and the US congressional notification requirements for foreign military sales.

Section 5 would establish the audit framework. The Comptroller and Auditor General would have full jurisdiction to audit all defense procurement activities, including classified programs subject to appropriate security arrangements. The CAG's defense audit findings would be provided to the parliamentary defense committee and published, with necessary redactions, in the annual defense audit report. The audit jurisdiction would extend not merely to financial regularity but to value for money, covering the question of whether the government obtained genuine worth for expenditure, not merely whether the money was spent in accordance with financial rules.

Section 6 would establish anti-corruption provisions specific to the defense procurement context. These would include a statutory cooling-off period of five years during which senior procurement officials and military officers who participated in a procurement decision would be prohibited from employment by the successful contractor. Criminal penalties for bribery, kickbacks, and corrupt disclosure of procurement information would be specified at levels substantially higher than those in the general corruption statute, reflecting the particularly serious nature of corruption in the national security context.

8.3 The Defense Economic Zone and the Legislative Framework for Indigenous Production

Bangladesh has proposed a Defense Economic Zone at an estimated cost of approximately 15,000 crore BDT, aiming for self-reliance and eventual export, with two high-level committees formed to guide its development: the Defense Industry Policy Implementation Committee, responsible for drafting and executing the national defense industry policy, and the Bangladesh National Defense Industry Development Coordination Council, which supervises overall progress. Defencejournalbd

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Defense Economic Zone proposal, however promising in concept, currently lacks statutory grounding. Both committees operate without legislative authorization, which means their decisions have no binding legal force, their governance is subject to executive discretion, and their activities are not subject to parliamentary accountability. The legislative framework for indigenous defense industry development must provide the statutory architecture that these committees currently lack.

The proposed Defense Industry Development Act would establish the Defense Economic Zone on a statutory basis, define the governance structure of the zone's management authority, specify the eligibility criteria for businesses operating within the zone, establish the regulatory framework for technology transfer agreements, specify the export control provisions applicable to defense products manufactured within the zone, and establish the intellectual property arrangements that govern domestically developed defense technologies.

The technology transfer provisions deserve particular attention. The Bangladesh Air Force signed a Letter of Intent with Leonardo S.p.A. of Italy in December 2025 to procure Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, covering the eventual supply of jets that are expected to join the Bangladesh Air Force's frontline fleet as part of its next-generation multi-role combat capabilities. Wikipedia Agreements of this magnitude almost certainly involve technology transfer and local production provisions that need to be governed by clear statutory rules. Without such rules, technology transfer negotiations are conducted on an ad hoc basis, the terms are not publicly disclosed, and Bangladesh's ability to actually benefit from the transferred technology, rather than merely using it in a single procurement, is severely compromised.

The Defense Industry Development Act should specifically require that all major defense procurement contracts of a certain threshold include technology transfer provisions, that technology transfer agreements be registered with the DAA and made available to the parliamentary defense committee, and that a Technology Transfer Oversight Board monitor the actual implementation of transfer commitments, which in the international experience are frequently less comprehensive in practice than they are in the contract language.

CHAPTER NINE: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT POSSIBILITIES AND DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

9.1 The Constitutional Architecture and Its Defense Governance Implications

Bangladesh's Constitution, as currently written, provides a skeletal framework for defense governance that leaves most fundamental questions to ordinary legislation and executive action. This skeletal character, as argued in earlier chapters, is not a neutral design choice: it has systematically favored executive and military authority over parliamentary and judicial accountability, because in the absence of clear constitutional requirements for transparency, oversight, and civilian control, institutional inertia and power politics have determined the outcome.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The February 2026 constitutional referendum represents the first serious opportunity since Bangladesh's founding to address these structural deficiencies at the constitutional level rather than merely the legislative one. The referendum outcome could introduce further institutional changes, including reforms affecting the balance of powers among the executive, legislative, and constitutional bodies, which if approved by voters would be implemented in accordance with the procedures and timelines set out in relevant constitutional amendments and enabling legislation. International Foundation for Electoral Systems

For defense governance specifically, several constitutional amendments would transform the structural framework within which legislative reform operates.

9.2 Proposed Constitutional Amendments Relating to Defense

The first proposed amendment would add to Article 61, which vests the Supreme Command of the defense services in the President, an explicit provision affirming that the exercise of that command authority is subject to the principles of civilian democratic control and parliamentary accountability as specified in the National Defense Act. This amendment would constitutionally ground the civilian control principle, making it resistant to legislative erosion by a future parliament that might otherwise amend the National Defense Act to reduce civilian control.

The second proposed amendment would add a new article establishing the parliamentary defense committee as a constitutionally mandated body, specifying its existence, its minimum powers of oversight, and its right of access to classified information subject to appropriate security arrangements. Constitutional mandating would prevent a future government from abolishing or marginalizing the committee through ordinary legislation or by simply refusing to appoint members or provide resources.

The third proposed amendment would add a new article establishing the requirement for parliamentary authorization of deployments of the armed forces in operations involving potential armed conflict, with exceptions for immediate self-defense against armed attack and for operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council. This amendment would constitutionally embed the parliamentary war powers principle, making it a fundamental element of Bangladesh's constitutional architecture rather than a merely statutory requirement that could be circumvented or repealed.

The fourth proposed amendment would add an explicit guarantee of freedom from arbitrary surveillance to the fundamental rights chapter of the Constitution. The existing right to privacy under Article 43 protects correspondence and domicile against arbitrary intrusion but is not generally interpreted to extend to electronic surveillance or to intelligence collection activities. An explicit constitutional guarantee of informational privacy, combined with the judicial warrant requirement in the proposed Intelligence Services Act, would create a constitutional right against which intelligence agency conduct could be evaluated and challenged.

The fifth proposed amendment would add a provision establishing the constitutional status of the parliamentary Comptroller and Auditor General and specifying that the CAG's jurisdiction extends to all defense activities without exception, subject only to such security arrangements as

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

parliament by law specifies. The current constitutional provision for the CAG does not clearly resolve the question of whether classified defense programs fall within audit jurisdiction, and the ambiguity has been systematically exploited by executive actors seeking to insulate defense expenditure from audit scrutiny.

9.3 The Amendment Process: Political Feasibility Analysis

Constitutional amendment in Bangladesh requires a two-thirds majority of parliament, which means that no single party or coalition can impose constitutional changes on a minority that holds more than one-third of parliamentary seats. This supermajority requirement creates a structural incentive for cross-party consensus in constitutional design, which is generally beneficial for the durability of the resulting constitutional provisions.

The political feasibility of the proposed amendments depends critically on the composition of the parliament elected in February 2026 and on the quality of cross-party dialogue about constitutional reform. Based on the analysis of Bangladesh's political landscape available at the time of writing, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, and newly registered political formations that collectively represent the reform coalition are likely to hold a significant parliamentary majority, though the precise distribution of seats is uncertain at the time of this textbook's preparation. The Awami League, suspended from electoral participation, is absent from this parliament entirely, which removes one major pole of political resistance to constitutional reform but also removes the voice of a large constituency.

The constitutional amendment agenda faces three specific political challenges. The first is military institutional resistance: the proposed amendments, particularly those establishing parliamentary war powers and constitutional audit jurisdiction over classified programs, directly constrain military institutional autonomy, and military leaders can be expected to lobby against them through informal channels. Managing this resistance requires political leadership willing to insist on constitutional reform even in the face of military pressure.

The second challenge is civil-political elite ambivalence. Some of the political parties participating in the reform coalition have their own reasons to prefer a relatively weak parliament and a strong executive, because they anticipate eventually controlling the executive. The constitutional reforms proposed here constrain executive as well as military power, and politicians who are currently out of power may be less enthusiastic about those constraints than their current reform rhetoric suggests. Building durable cross-party consensus on constitutional reform requires engaging politicians' long-term institutional interests, not merely their short-term political alignment.

The third challenge is the legitimacy gap of the reform period. The ordinances enacted during the interim government period, including any constitutional modifications made by presidential order before the February 2026 elections, may face questions about their democratic legitimacy when a new elected parliament convenes. The new parliament should conduct a systematic review of all pre-election reforms, affirm those it endorses through proper parliamentary procedure, amend those it finds problematic, and proceed to a constitutional amendment agenda based on its own democratic mandate.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER TEN: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY WHITE PAPER: LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND DRAFTING PRINCIPLES

10.1 The White Paper as a Legal Instrument and Policy Document

Among the most consequential and most frequently discussed of the proposed legislative requirements is the mandate for a National Defense Policy White Paper. Part Ten of this textbook noted the absence of any such document in Bangladesh's defense policy history. Bangladesh has never published a comprehensive, official document articulating its defense policy, its strategic assessment of threats and opportunities, its prioritization of capabilities, and its vision for the armed forces' role in national development and international peace.

This absence is not unusual in the early stages of a state's institutional development, but it has become increasingly anomalous as Bangladesh's geopolitical significance, military capability, and international defense partnerships have grown. Every defense establishment with which Bangladesh conducts significant security cooperation, whether the United States, Turkey, Japan, or China, publishes periodic defense white papers or strategy documents that provide a transparent articulation of policy for both domestic audiences and international partners. The absence of an equivalent Bangladeshi document creates uncertainty for partners, reduces domestic accountability for defense expenditure, and makes coherent long-term defense planning significantly more difficult.

The proposed National Defense Act should include a mandatory requirement for the publication of a National Defense Policy White Paper by the government within eighteen months of taking office after each parliamentary election, and for the submission of the White Paper to the parliamentary defense committee and the full parliament for debate and review before publication. This requirement should be constitutionally grounded through the constitutional amendment process described in Chapter Nine.

10.2 The Content Requirements for the Defense White Paper

The legislation should specify the minimum content requirements for the defense white paper, ensuring that it addresses all the dimensions of defense policy that require public articulation while leaving the government sufficient flexibility to adapt the document to the specific security environment of the relevant period.

The mandatory content requirements should include the following elements. First, a strategic assessment section that provides the government's official assessment of the security environment: the principal threats to Bangladesh's security, the opportunities available to advance Bangladesh's security interests, the relevant global and regional dynamics, and the principal uncertainties that affect the strategic assessment. This section should be written in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

sufficient analytical depth to provide a genuine basis for understanding the policy choices that follow, rather than serving merely as a catalog of abstract concerns.

Second, a policy framework section that articulates the foundational principles of Bangladesh's defense policy: its commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes, its support for the United Nations system, its policy of non-alignment, its relationships with key security partners, and its approach to the specific regional security challenges documented in the strategic assessment. This section should be honest about the trade-offs involved in policy choices, acknowledging the tensions between, for example, security cooperation with China and security cooperation with the United States, rather than pretending that these relationships are entirely unproblematic.

Third, a force structure section that describes the intended organization, size, and disposition of the armed forces: the number of army divisions, naval vessels, and air force squadrons, the geographic distribution of forces, the balance between combat and support functions, and the planned evolution of force structure over the white paper period. This section need not disclose classified operational plans or precise force locations, but it should provide sufficient information to permit meaningful assessment of whether the force structure is appropriate for the threats identified in the strategic assessment.

Fourth, a capability development section that describes the priority areas for military modernization over the white paper period: the major equipment programs under way or planned, the doctrine development priorities, the personnel and training investments, and the indigenous defense industry development goals. This section should connect capability development priorities to the strategic assessment and policy framework, demonstrating that acquisition decisions are driven by genuine strategic analysis rather than by organizational preferences or commercial relationships.

Fifth, a resource allocation section that explains how the defense budget is distributed among the three services and among operational, development, and capital expenditure categories, and that articulates the criteria by which resource allocation decisions are made. This section should be presented in sufficient financial detail to permit the parliamentary defense committee and civil society analysts to assess whether the budget choices are consistent with stated policy priorities.

Sixth, an international engagement section that describes Bangladesh's approach to bilateral defense relationships, multilateral security cooperation, arms control commitments, and United Nations peacekeeping contributions. This section should be honest about the constraints that bilateral commitments impose on Bangladesh's strategic autonomy and about the benefits that these relationships provide.

Seventh, a review and accountability section that describes the mechanisms by which the government's defense policy will be monitored and assessed over the white paper period, including the role of the parliamentary defense committee, the defense audit process, and any external advisory bodies convened for strategic assessment purposes.

10.3 The Drafting Process: Participation, Consultation, and Legitimacy

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The quality of the defense white paper depends not only on its content but on its drafting process. A white paper produced exclusively within the bureaucratic confines of the defense ministry and the armed forces headquarters will inevitably reflect the institutional perspectives and vested interests of those organizations, at the expense of the broader national perspective that a genuinely authoritative policy document requires.

The proposed legislative requirement should mandate a consultative drafting process that includes the following elements. First, an inter-ministerial drafting committee chaired by the NSA, including representatives from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the intelligence services. This committee would ensure that the white paper reflects the full range of government perspectives rather than merely the military's institutional preferences.

Second, an external advisory panel composed of academic experts in security studies, international law, defense economics, and regional affairs, appointed by the parliamentary defense committee from a pool of nominees submitted by leading universities, research institutions, and civil society organizations. This panel would review and comment on successive drafts of the white paper, providing independent analytical perspectives that challenge the assumptions and conclusions of the official drafting committee.

Third, a civil society consultation process, through which draft sections of the white paper are made available for public comment through a formal process administered by the Ministry of Defense. The consultation process would not give civil society organizations a veto over white paper content, but it would ensure that the government's defense policy choices are made with awareness of public concerns and that the white paper's claims about national security are subjected to the discipline of public scrutiny.

Fourth, parliamentary review before publication. The draft white paper, with classified annexes provided only to cleared members of the defense committee, should be submitted to the parliamentary defense committee at least sixty days before the intended publication date, giving the committee sufficient time to hold hearings, consult expert witnesses, and produce a committee report with observations and recommendations. The government should be required to respond formally to the committee's report, either accepting its recommendations or providing written justification for departing from them.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE BORDER SECURITY LEGISLATION: A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK

11.1 The Legislative Gap in Bangladesh's Border Management Framework

Bangladesh's borders are among the most complex and contested in South Asia. The 4,156-kilometer border with India, the roughly 271-kilometer border with Myanmar, the maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal, and the administrative boundaries of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

region all present distinct security challenges requiring distinct legislative responses. Yet Bangladesh's legislative framework for border security is, like its defense governance framework generally, fragmentary, outdated, and inadequately adapted to the security realities of the twenty-first century.

The Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) operates under the Border Guard Bangladesh Act of 2010, which replaced the earlier Bangladesh Rifles legislation following the 2009 BDR mutiny. The 2010 Act was an improvement on its predecessor in several respects, particularly in establishing clearer accountability mechanisms within the BGB and in modernizing the legal framework governing BGB operations. But it does not address the fundamental questions of border security architecture: the coordination between BGB and the regular armed forces, the legal framework for cross-border intelligence operations, the legal basis for the use of lethal force at the border, or the management of situations involving armed non-state actors operating across the border.

The Myanmar border presents the most immediate challenge. The ongoing civil war in Myanmar, the Arakan Army's control of significant portions of Rakhine State adjacent to the Naf River border, the cross-border movement of weapons, fighters, and refugees, and the documented instances of incursions into Bangladeshi territory by parties to the Myanmar conflict have created a security situation that the BGB Act of 2010 was not designed to handle. The legal framework for Bangladesh's response to these cross-border challenges is unclear: under what circumstances may Bangladeshi forces use force against armed groups entering from Myanmar? What legal authority exists for coordinated operations between the BGB and the Bangladesh Army in border areas? What reporting requirements apply to cross-border incidents?

11.2 The Proposed Border Security Act: Key Provisions

The proposed Border Security Act would establish a comprehensive, unified legislative framework for all dimensions of Bangladesh's border security, replacing or supplementing the existing BGB Act with a statute designed for the current security environment.

Part One would establish the definitions and scope of the Act, including a definition of the border zone (the area within twenty kilometers of any international boundary) within which the special provisions of the Act apply, the definition of the relevant law enforcement and military agencies, and the definition of the threat categories that the Act is designed to address.

Part Two would establish the governance framework for border security: the Border Security Council, an inter-agency body chaired by the Minister of Home Affairs and including the chiefs of the BGB, the Army's relevant regional commanders, the NSI, the Customs Authority, and the Immigration Department. The Border Security Council would be responsible for coordinating border security policy across agencies, resolving jurisdictional disputes, and reporting to the NSC on border security developments. This coordination architecture directly addresses one of the most persistent problems in Bangladesh's border security, the absence of effective coordination mechanisms between the multiple agencies with roles in border management.

Part Three would establish the use of force framework for border security operations. The Act would specify the conditions under which BGB personnel may use lethal force at the border: in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

self-defense against armed attack, in defense of others against armed attack, and to prevent the escape of a suspect who poses an immediate threat of grievous harm to others. The Act would explicitly prohibit the use of lethal force solely to prevent unauthorized crossing of the border by unarmed civilians, reflecting both international human rights law and Bangladesh's specific commitment to the protection of the Rohingya refugees and other vulnerable migrants who cross the border without authorization.

This use of force framework addresses one of the most serious human rights concerns in Bangladesh's border security: the pattern of killings at the India-Bangladesh border and, to a lesser extent, the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, which have been documented by Human Rights Watch and other organizations. The statutory use of force framework would not merely reflect existing international law obligations but would create a domestic enforcement mechanism, through the military justice reform framework, for holding border security personnel accountable for unlawful use of force.

Part Four would establish the legal framework for cross-border intelligence operations: the authority to conduct intelligence collection activities in border areas of foreign countries adjacent to Bangladesh, the approval process required for such operations, and the constraints on the nature of intelligence activities that may be conducted in such areas. The cross-border intelligence operations framework would be consistent with the Intelligence Services Act proposed in Chapter Seven.

Part Five would establish the humanitarian framework for border security, requiring that all border security operations be conducted in a manner consistent with Bangladesh's obligations under international refugee law and international humanitarian law, and establishing specific procedural requirements for the treatment of individuals apprehended at the border.

CHAPTER TWELVE: COMPARATIVE MODELS FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORM: THE PATH FORWARD FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

12.1 What Comparative Analysis Can and Cannot Tell Us

The preceding chapters have drawn extensively on comparative experience in proposing legislative reforms for Bangladesh's defense governance. This chapter pauses to reflect systematically on what the comparative experience tells us, and on the limits of that evidence. The risk of uncritical transfer of legislative models from other countries to Bangladesh is real: institutions that function well in the constitutional, political, and cultural context that produced them may function very differently, or not at all, in a different context. The comparative method is a source of insight and inspiration, not a blueprint.

The Korean Defense Reform experience is perhaps the most directly instructive for Bangladesh, because Korea has faced analogous challenges: military political power, procurement corruption,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

and the institutional task of establishing genuine civilian control over an armed forces culture formed under conditions of military rule. Korea's Defense Reform Act, first enacted in 2006, has produced significant institutional change over nearly two decades of implementation, but it has not produced perfect democratic defense governance. The Korean military's institutional culture has proven more resistant to civilian control than reformers hoped, procurement corruption continues to generate periodic scandals, and the relationship between the Defense Acquisition Program Administration and the armed services remains contested. These residual problems in Korea's defense governance reform are not an argument against similar reform in Bangladesh; they are an argument for realistic expectations about the pace and completeness of change.

The Finnish model of comprehensive defense legislation combined with a strong reserve force system and total defense philosophy offers a different set of lessons. Finland's defense legislation is remarkable for its clarity, its constitutional grounding, and its genuine integration of civilian and military planning processes. Finland's experience with the Conscription Act, the Military Service Act, and the Territorial Surveillance Act demonstrates how a small state can create a legislative framework for comprehensive defense that reflects both democratic values and genuine military effectiveness. The Finnish Defense White Paper process, with its extensive parliamentary participation and cross-party consensus-building, provides a specific legislative process model that Bangladesh's white paper requirement should emulate.

The German parliamentary participation model for deployment authorization has already been discussed extensively, but it deserves additional emphasis here. Germany's experience over twenty years of parliamentary war powers has demonstrated that parliamentary involvement in deployment decisions, properly structured, does not paralyze military decision-making: Germany has deployed its forces to dozens of international operations under the parliamentary participation law, including combat operations in Afghanistan that were politically controversial. The parliamentary process has required the government to articulate and defend the strategic rationale for deployments in ways that build public understanding and democratic legitimacy, even when deployments are controversial.

12.2 The South African Model: Defense Oversight in a Post-Authoritarian Democracy

South Africa's defense governance reform following the end of apartheid in 1994 offers particularly relevant lessons for a post-authoritarian transition context. The South African Defence Act of 2002 was the product of a comprehensive legislative reform process that replaced the apartheid-era Defense Act with a statute designed for democratic governance. The Act established civilian leadership of the Ministry of Defence, parliamentary oversight mechanisms including standing committees with strong powers, clear chains of command with specified civilian authority at each level, and accountability mechanisms for the use of force that reflected South Africa's constitutional commitment to human rights.

The South African experience illustrates both the opportunities and the risks of comprehensive defense reform in a transition context. The opportunities include the political momentum generated by democratic legitimacy and the willingness of the new governing coalition to confront institutional interests that had been protected under the previous regime. The risks

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

include the institutional resistance of security sector actors, the technical complexity of implementing comprehensive reform with limited bureaucratic capacity, and the danger that reform momentum will dissipate as the transition period normalizes.

Bangladesh faces an analogous situation in 2026: a genuine democratic transition creating political momentum for reform, combined with institutional resistance from security sector actors, limited bureaucratic reform capacity, and the risk of momentum loss as political competition returns to normal. The South African experience suggests that reform success depends on three factors: strong political leadership committed to the full implementation of reform, sufficient resources allocated to building the civilian expertise and institutional capacity necessary to make the new framework functional, and civil society engagement that maintains public pressure for accountability through the inevitable difficulties of implementation.

12.3 The Indonesian Reform Experience: Lessons for the Long Term

Indonesia's military reform following the fall of Suharto in 1998 provides the most extensive case study of defense governance transformation in a Muslim-majority democratic country, and therefore carries particular relevance for Bangladesh. The Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), like Bangladesh's armed forces, had long been a political institution rather than merely a military one: it exercised territorial governance functions through its Territorial Command system, occupied seats in the legislature, controlled vast business enterprises, and intervened routinely in civilian political processes.

The Indonesian reform process, stretching from 1998 through a series of legislative and constitutional changes over the following decade, successfully accomplished several fundamental transformations: the withdrawal of the TNI from formal legislative representation, the gradual reduction of its territorial command functions, the separation of the police from the military, and the beginning of a reform of the business enterprises that gave the TNI independent economic resources. These achievements, genuinely significant by any measure, were the product of sustained political effort over a decade, not of a single legislative act.

What the Indonesian experience also demonstrates is the limits of reform in the absence of strong civilian capacity. The civilian Defense Ministry that emerged from the reform period was understaffed, underqualified, and insufficiently assertive in exercising the authority that the reformed legal framework nominally gave it. Military planners who had spent careers thinking about strategy and force development were not effectively countered by civilian officials who often lacked comparable expertise. The result was that formal civilian authority over the military was established in law while de facto military institutional autonomy was preserved in practice.

For Bangladesh, the lesson is clear: legislative reform of defense governance must be accompanied by sustained investment in civilian defense expertise, including in the defense ministry, the parliamentary staff, the intelligence oversight commissioner's office, and the defense acquisition authority. The legislation creates the framework; the capacity fills it with substance.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE COMPREHENSIVE LEGISLATIVE ROADMAP

13.1 Sequencing the Reform Agenda

The legislative reforms described in the preceding chapters constitute an ambitious agenda. No parliament, however committed to reform and however well-organized, can enact comprehensive defense governance legislation in a single legislative session. A realistic implementation strategy requires careful sequencing: prioritizing the reforms that are most critical, most feasible, and most conducive to building momentum for subsequent reforms, while deferring those that are more technically complex, more politically sensitive, or more dependent on prior institutional development.

The proposed sequencing operates over three distinct legislative phases.

Phase One, covering the first parliamentary year of 2026 to 2027, should focus on the foundational enabling legislation: the National Security Council Act, the Parliamentary Defense Committee Act, and the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner Act. These three statutes create the institutional architecture for everything that follows: the NSC legislation establishes the highest-level decision-making framework, the parliamentary committee legislation creates the oversight infrastructure, and the oversight commissioner legislation creates the independent accountability mechanism. None of these statutes is technically simple, but all three are more politically feasible than the more contentious reforms, because they do not directly challenge existing institutional interests as dramatically as, for example, military justice reform or comprehensive intelligence legislation.

Phase One should also include the constitutional amendment resolution establishing the parliamentary war powers provision and the mandatory defense white paper requirement. Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority and cannot be enacted overnight, but beginning the process in the first parliamentary year creates the political framework within which subsequent phases operate.

Phase Two, covering the second parliamentary year of 2027 to 2028, should address the Defense Procurement Act, the Defense Industry Development Act, and the Border Security Act. The procurement legislation is technically complex and politically sensitive, but the political environment created by Phase One reforms, particularly the strengthened parliamentary committee and the new oversight commissioner, will be more conducive to procurement transparency than the existing environment. The industry development legislation builds on the procurement reform by creating the statutory framework for indigenous production. The border security legislation addresses an immediate operational requirement and is likely to attract broader cross-party support than the more politically contentious military justice and intelligence legislation.

Phase Three, covering the third and fourth parliamentary years of 2028 to 2030, should address the most technically demanding and politically sensitive reforms: the Military Justice Reform

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Act, the comprehensive Intelligence Services Act, and the National Defense Act itself. The National Defense Act is the capstone legislation that consolidates all preceding reforms into a coherent statutory framework, and it makes sense to draft it after the specific component legislation has been enacted and its implementation has begun to reveal the practical problems that the comprehensive statute must address.

This sequencing is not rigid: if political opportunities arise to accelerate specific elements of the reform agenda, they should be seized. But the general logic of building institutional capacity, creating political coalitions, and addressing lower-hanging fruit before the most difficult reforms reflects the accumulated comparative experience of defense governance reform in multiple countries and contexts.

13.2 The Role of Civil Society in Legislative Reform

Civil society organizations, academic institutions, legal professionals, and the media all have essential roles in the defense legislation reform process. The comparative experience consistently demonstrates that legislative reform processes that engage civil society are more likely to produce genuine accountability legislation, and less likely to produce legislation that is nominally reformist but substantively empty, than those that confine the drafting process to governmental actors.

In Bangladesh's specific context, civil society engagement in defense legislation has historically been extremely limited. Defense is treated as a domain of governmental and military secrecy from which civilian institutions are excluded. This exclusion has not merely been a practical obstacle to accountability; it has been an ideological position, rooted in the military's institutional culture and its claim to professional autonomy from civilian scrutiny.

Overcoming this exclusion requires deliberate legislative design. The proposed requirements for civil society consultation in the white paper process, for academic participation in the technical evaluation boards of the procurement system, and for parliamentary engagement with civil society expert witnesses in the defense committee hearing process all create specific institutional channels through which civil society can participate in defense governance without compromising operational security.

The legal profession has a particularly important role. The Military Justice Reform Act, the Intelligence Services Act, and the constitutional amendments relating to fundamental rights all require engagement from legal scholars who can bring the disciplines of constitutional analysis, comparative law, and international human rights law to bear on the drafting process. Bangladesh's law schools and bar councils should be actively engaged in the defense legislation reform process from its earliest stages.

Academic institutions, particularly those with security studies programs, provide the analytical expertise that informed legislative deliberation requires. The current state of defense studies in Bangladesh, while growing, does not yet provide the depth of domestic expertise that a comprehensive legislative reform process ideally needs. This capacity gap argues for urgency in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

developing defense studies programs at Bangladesh's leading universities, and for engaging the international academic community in the reform process in the interim.

13.3 International Support and Its Appropriate Limits

The legislative reform agenda described in this chapter will require substantial international support: technical assistance in drafting model legislation, expertise in the design of parliamentary oversight mechanisms, funding for institutional capacity building, and political support from international partners who understand that democratic defense governance is a foundation for the stable bilateral relationships that both Bangladesh and its partners seek.

Donor governments should make investment in security sector reform contingent on core structural reforms, particularly addressing political interference in the police, prosecutor's office, and judiciary, ensuring civilian oversight and accountability, and ending abusive practices. Human Rights Watch This conditionality principle, while sometimes resented as interference in domestic affairs, reflects the genuine interdependence between democratic governance reform and sustainable international engagement: countries that do not control their security forces democratically are not reliable long-term partners.

The United Nations Development Programme, the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, and various bilateral aid programs from democratic countries including the United States, the European Union members, and Japan all have programs relevant to security sector reform. Bangladesh should actively engage these sources of support while maintaining its principle of strategic autonomy: accepting technical assistance without conceding policy independence.

The limits of international support must also be clearly understood. Comparative models and technical assistance can inform legislation; they cannot substitute for the political will of Bangladesh's own leaders and the democratic engagement of Bangladesh's own citizens. The most expertly drafted defense legislation will be ineffective if the institutions it creates are not staffed by qualified, committed, and independent professionals. The most robust parliamentary oversight framework will be hollow if parliamentarians do not take their oversight responsibilities seriously. The ultimate foundation of democratic defense governance is not legislation but political culture, and that culture can be shaped by institutional design but cannot be created by it.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: DEFENSE JURISPRUDENCE: THE COURTS AND THE SECURITY STATE

14.1 Judicial Review of Defense and Security Decisions

The role of the courts in reviewing defense and security decisions is one of the most contested questions in constitutional democracy. On one side stands the principle of judicial deference: courts, composed of legally trained but strategically uninformed judges, are poorly equipped to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

second-guess executive and military judgments about national security, and judicial intervention in security matters may harm national security by constraining operational flexibility, discouraging bold but necessary actions, and exposing sensitive information to public disclosure.

On the other side stands the principle of judicial supremacy in fundamental rights: the courts are the guardians of constitutional rights, and no claim of national security necessity justifies the arbitrary deprivation of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. The executive's interest in operational freedom cannot override the individual's constitutional right to judicial protection against arbitrary power.

Bangladesh's Supreme Court has historically tilted strongly toward judicial deference in security matters, partly reflecting genuine uncertainty about the scope of judicial authority in this domain and partly reflecting the political pressures that have historically constrained judicial independence. The post-2024 reform environment creates an opportunity to rebalance this relationship: not to eliminate judicial deference entirely, which would be constitutionally inappropriate and operationally problematic, but to establish clearer standards defining the scope of judicial review in national security cases and providing constitutional guidance for when deference is appropriate and when it is not.

The comparative jurisprudence on this question has evolved significantly in recent decades. The United Kingdom's House of Lords decision in A v. Secretary of State (2004), ruling that indefinite detention of foreign nationals without trial was incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights even in a declared public emergency, established the principle that even the most extreme security measures are subject to judicial review for compatibility with fundamental rights. The United States Supreme Court's Boumediene v. Bush (2008) decision, extending habeas corpus rights to detainees held at Guantanamo Bay, affirmed a similar principle in the American context.

Bangladesh's Supreme Court has issued significant decisions on security detention in the past, including rulings under the Special Powers Act and challenges to the operation of the RAB. But these decisions have been inconsistent and have not produced a coherent jurisprudence of security law. The proposed legislative reforms should create clearer constitutional and statutory frameworks that guide judicial review without substituting legislative judgments for judicial ones.

14.2 The Bangladesh Security Detention Framework: Legislative Reform

Security detention, the detention of individuals on national security grounds without the normal requirements of criminal charge and trial, is one of the most constitutionally sensitive exercises of governmental power. Bangladesh has a long history of security detention under the Special Powers Act and other instruments, and that history includes numerous cases of detention used for political rather than genuine security purposes.

The reform of the security detention framework should pursue three objectives. First, abolition or fundamental transformation of the Special Powers Act, which provides detention authority so broad and so poorly supervised as to be constitutionally incompatible with any meaningful

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

interpretation of Bangladesh's fundamental rights guarantees. The interim government's reform of the Digital Security Act, replaced by a Cyber Security Act that retained many problematic provisions, illustrates the danger of nominally replacing abusive legislation while preserving its essential character. Detention legislation reform must be substantive, not merely cosmetic.

Second, the creation of a genuinely judicial framework for security detention: any administrative detention on national security grounds should require the authorization of a designated security judge, be subject to judicial review at regular intervals, be limited in total duration, and be accompanied by access to independent legal counsel. The detainee should have the right to challenge the factual basis of detention before the security judge, even if the specific intelligence evidence is presented in camera and in summary form.

Third, the creation of an independent monitoring mechanism for security detainees, with access to all places of detention and the authority to investigate complaints and publish findings. The National Human Rights Commission should be strengthened for this purpose, given resources sufficient to maintain a presence in all detention facilities and given statutory authority to access classified detention records subject to appropriate security arrangements.

14.3 Strategic Litigation and Its Role in Defense Law Reform

Strategic litigation, the deliberate use of court cases to establish legal principles that advance a broader reform agenda, has been an important tool of democratic governance reform in multiple countries. In the context of Bangladesh's defense law reform, strategic litigation can play several roles: challenging specific abuses to establish legal precedents that constrain future conduct, forcing the disclosure of information through freedom of information litigation that expands the base of evidence available for democratic accountability, and clarifying constitutional ambiguities that the legislative process has been unable to resolve.

The Bangladesh legal community, including the Supreme Court Bar Association, the human rights law community, and academic lawyers, should develop a strategic litigation agenda that systematically advances the constitutional principles underlying the legislative reform framework. This means identifying the cases that offer the best opportunities for favorable precedent, providing legal support to complainants in those cases, and building the networks of legal expertise and civil society support that make sustained litigation possible.

The courts cannot substitute for legislation, but they can and do create the constitutional environment within which legislation operates. A jurisprudence that firmly establishes the constitutional requirement of civilian democratic control over the armed forces, the right to judicial review of intelligence surveillance, and the application of proportionality and necessity to the use of force in domestic security operations would create constitutional guardrails that reinforce and extend the statutory reforms proposed in this chapter.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: DEFENSE POLICY TOWARD 2030 AND BEYOND: THE LEGISLATIVE FOUNDATION FOR STRATEGIC AMBITION

15.1 The $75 Billion Defense Modernization Proposal and Its Legislative Requirements

The proposed $75 billion defense modernization program of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, spanning from 2026 to 2040, marks a profound shift in Dhaka's military doctrine, force posture, and international partnerships, structured across a tri-service transformation that envisions an integrated military with advanced network-centric warfare capabilities, strategic deterrence assets, and indigenous defense industrial development. Bdmilitary

A defense modernization program of this scale and ambition is not merely a military planning exercise. It is a major public expenditure program, a significant economic intervention, and a geopolitically consequential set of capability acquisitions, all of which require a robust legislative framework to ensure accountability, efficiency, and strategic coherence. The legislative reforms described in this chapter are not merely institutional tidying: they are the essential framework within which a program of this ambition can be credibly managed.

Consider the procurement dimensions alone. A $75 billion program over fifteen years implies average annual procurement of approximately $5 billion, which is ten to fifteen times Bangladesh's current defense procurement spending. Managing this volume of procurement through the existing system, which lacks competitive tendering requirements, independent technical evaluation, parliamentary oversight, and audit jurisdiction, would create opportunities for corruption, inefficiency, and strategic mischoice that would undermine the entire program.

The Defense Acquisition Authority proposed in Chapter Eight would be the institutional manager of this program. Its independent structure, civilian leadership, technical evaluation capacity, and parliamentary accountability mechanisms are precisely calibrated for managing a major, sustained acquisition program. Without the DAA, the alternative is management within the military chain of command, which, as the comparative experience from multiple countries including India's decade-long experience with the Rafale procurement controversy demonstrates, is structurally ill-suited to managing large, complex, commercially contested procurement programs.

15.2 The Japan Defense Agreement and the Legislative Framework for Technology Transfer

Bangladesh and Japan signed a formal agreement on 3 February 2026 to facilitate the transfer of defense equipment and technology, with the deal signed in Dhaka establishing a legal framework governing the handling and transfer of military equipment between the two nations. Wikipedia

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This agreement is significant not merely as a bilateral milestone but as a legislative challenge. The agreement creates new legal obligations and new capabilities, but it does not resolve the domestic legislative questions about how technology acquired through Japan's Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement framework, and similar agreements with Turkey, the United States, and Italy, will be governed once it enters Bangladesh's defense ecosystem.

The Defense Industry Development Act proposed in Chapter Eight should specifically address the requirements of reciprocal technology transfer agreements with partner states. The Act should establish the legal framework for joint ventures between Bangladeshi entities and foreign defense firms, the intellectual property arrangements for jointly developed technologies, the export control provisions applicable to technology derived from foreign transfer, and the reporting requirements that ensure transfer commitments are actually honored.

The Japan agreement, which covers defense equipment transfer within a framework analogous to Japan's own security export control regime, will require Bangladesh to develop a domestic security export control system compatible with Japan's standards. This is a significant legislative undertaking in its own right: a comprehensive export control law covering dual-use technologies, defense equipment, and sensitive technical information. Bangladesh currently lacks such legislation, creating a gap in its compliance with international arms transfer norms and its eligibility for certain categories of technology transfer from advanced technology states.

15.3 The Eurofighter Decision and Parliamentary Accountability for Major Acquisition Decisions

The Bangladesh Air Force signed a Letter of Intent with Leonardo S.p.A. of Italy in December 2025 to procure Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, with the agreement covering the eventual supply of jets expected to join the Bangladesh Air Force's frontline fleet as part of its next-generation multi-role combat capabilities. Wikipedia The financial scale of this acquisition, estimated at approximately $2.5 to $3 billion, makes it one of the largest single defense procurement decisions in Bangladesh's history. It demands parliamentary accountability of a kind that the current framework is entirely unable to provide.

Under the proposed Defense Procurement Act, an acquisition of this scale would require notification to the parliamentary defense committee before the Letter of Intent is signed, submission of a detailed program justification document including the strategic rationale, the technical evaluation of competing aircraft types, the offset and technology transfer provisions, and the financing arrangements, and committee approval before execution of the final contract. This process would not delay procurement unreasonably: a sixty-day parliamentary review process is entirely consistent with the multi-year timeline of a major combat aircraft acquisition. But it would ensure that the decision is made with democratic accountability, not merely with executive and military authority.

The parallel Chinese procurement, comprising twenty Chengdu J-10CE fighter jets at an estimated cost of $2.2 billion Defencejournalbd, would be subject to the same parliamentary oversight requirements. The fact that both European and Chinese acquisitions are subject to the same oversight framework is itself important: it demonstrates the non-discriminatory application

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

of procurement transparency requirements and prevents the preferential treatment of politically favored suppliers that has historically distorted Bangladesh's procurement decisions.

15.4 Long-Term Vision: Defense Governance and National Development

The legislative reform agenda described in this chapter serves not only the immediate goal of improving defense governance accountability. It serves the long-term goal of integrating Bangladesh's defense sector into the broader framework of good governance that sustainable national development requires.

The relationship between defense governance quality and national development outcomes is not merely theoretical. Countries with transparent, accountable, and democratically controlled defense sectors consistently achieve better development outcomes than those with opaque, unaccountable military institutions, partly because defense corruption diverts resources from development, partly because military political intervention distorts economic policy, and partly because the institutional culture of democratic accountability, once established in the security sector, tends to spread to other domains of governance.

Bangladesh's aspirations for upper-middle-income country status by 2031 and for a developed country status by 2041 are not achievable on the basis of a governance system in which the defense sector operates outside democratic accountability. The resources required for the $75 billion modernization program must be justified to the citizens who pay for it; the decisions made in that program must be defensible on the basis of strategic necessity rather than institutional preference; and the outcomes of the program must be assessed against measurable criteria of military effectiveness and national security benefit. All of these requirements are the requirements of democratic defense governance, and all of them depend on the legislative framework described in this chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: PHILOSOPHY OF DEFENSE LAW: THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF THE REFORM AGENDA

16.1 Returning to Foundations: Why Law Governs Defense

This textbook began, in Part One, with a philosophical inquiry into the nature of defense: what it means to defend, who has the authority to defend, and what constraints govern the exercise of defensive force. Part Thirteen concludes with a return to those foundations, asking the philosophical question that underlies the entire legislative reform agenda: why should law govern defense at all?

The question is worth asking seriously, because the arguments against legal constraints on defense are not trivial. Defense, in its most demanding forms, requires the willingness to kill and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

to die in the service of the political community. The people who perform this function operate in conditions of extreme danger, time pressure, and moral complexity that ordinary legal frameworks were not designed to govern. The soldier in combat, the intelligence officer managing a source in a hostile country, the naval commander making split-second decisions about rules of engagement: all of these actors work in environments where the application of ordinary legal categories is genuinely problematic.

And yet the argument for law's governance of defense is, in the end, overwhelming. Law is not merely a constraint on power; it is the expression of political community. A state that uses force without legal authorization is not defending itself: it is expressing the private violence of those who control it. A military that operates without legal accountability is not the armed forces of a democratic republic: it is an armed faction serving its own institutional interests. A procurement system without legal transparency is not serving the security needs of the nation: it is serving the financial interests of those who control it.

The philosophical tradition from Grotius through Vattel through the contemporary international lawyers who have developed the laws of armed conflict all converge on this point: the legitimacy of the use of force depends on its legality. And legality in a democratic republic means legality defined by the representatives of the people through legislative process, enforced by independent courts, and accountable to the citizens who bear both the costs and the benefits of defense.

16.2 The Rawlsian Framework and Defense Policy

John Rawls's theory of justice, perhaps the most influential work of political philosophy of the twentieth century, provides a particularly useful framework for evaluating the justice of defense governance arrangements. Rawls's original position thought experiment asks: what principles of justice would rational persons choose if they did not know their place in society, their class position, their natural abilities, or their conception of the good? Applied to defense governance, the question becomes: what rules for the use of force, what oversight mechanisms, what accountability arrangements, would rational persons choose if they did not know whether they would be powerful military commanders or vulnerable civilians, wealthy arms contractors or ordinary taxpayers, political insiders with access to classified information or ordinary citizens excluded from defense decision-making?

The Rawlsian answer to this question strongly supports the legislative reform agenda described in this chapter. Behind the veil of ignorance, rational persons would insist on accountability mechanisms, because they might be among those subjected to arbitrary use of force. They would insist on transparent procurement, because they might be among those whose taxes pay for corrupt contracts. They would insist on independent intelligence oversight, because they might be among those subjected to arbitrary surveillance. They would insist on parliamentary war powers, because they might be among those sent to fight in wars they did not choose.

The Rawlsian argument for democratic defense governance is not merely that it produces better outcomes in the aggregate, though it does. It is that it is the only arrangement that treats each member of the political community as a person with equal moral worth, entitled to equal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

protection of their fundamental rights, rather than as an instrument to be used for the defense purposes of those who happen to control the state's coercive apparatus.

16.3 The Communitarian Dimension: Defense, Identity, and Political Community

Liberal political philosophy, in its Rawlsian and other varieties, tends to treat individuals as the primary subjects of political morality, with communities derivative from individual choices and agreements. The communitarian critique of liberalism, associated with thinkers including Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair MacIntyre, insists that individuals are irreducibly embedded in communities that give their lives meaning and that constitute, not merely serve, their interests.

For defense governance, the communitarian perspective adds an important dimension. Bangladesh's armed forces are not merely a security service hired by citizens to protect their individual interests. They are an expression of national community, a guardian of the collective identity and the historical achievements of a people who came together through a liberation war that was itself a communal act of self-determination. The liberation war values, the principles of democracy, secularism, nationalism, and socialism that the constitution enshrines, are not merely political preferences: they are the moral substance of the community that the defense forces exist to protect.

This communitarian understanding of defense has two implications for the legislative reform agenda. First, it grounds the authority of the democratic community, expressed through its parliament, to define the purposes and limits of its armed forces: the military is the community's instrument, not its master. Second, it insists that the community's understanding of itself, expressed in its constitution, its history, its cultural values, and its liberation struggle, must inform the substantive principles of defense law, not merely the procedural mechanisms of democratic accountability. A defense law that is procedurally democratic but substantively incompatible with Bangladesh's historical identity and constitutional values is not a genuine expression of Bangladesh's political community.

16.4 Islamic Political Philosophy and the Governance of Defense

Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority state whose citizens' political and moral sensibilities are deeply informed by Islamic tradition. Any comprehensive treatment of the philosophical foundations of Bangladesh's defense governance must engage seriously with Islamic political philosophy's understanding of the legitimate exercise of coercive power.

The Islamic jurisprudential tradition, as noted in Part One of this textbook, has developed sophisticated doctrines governing war, governance, and the accountability of rulers. The concept of shura, or consultation, which the Quran presents as a characteristic of the believing community, provides an Islamic foundation for the participatory and deliberative governance processes that this chapter advocates. The requirement that rulers be accountable to the community they serve and exercise power in accordance with principles of justice (adalah) rather than personal preference resonates directly with the democratic accountability requirements of the legislative reform agenda.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The concept of maslaha, or public interest, which classical jurists employed to justify departing from strict textual interpretation when necessary to serve the genuine welfare of the community, provides an Islamic jurisprudential basis for the pragmatic, needs-based approach to defense legislation that this chapter advocates. A defense legislation framework that genuinely serves the welfare of Bangladesh's citizens, that protects them from both external threats and the abuse of their own government's security apparatus, that treats them as persons of equal dignity whose fundamental rights cannot be sacrificed to institutional convenience, is a framework consistent with the deepest values of Islamic political thought.

The controversial aspects of the relationship between Islamic political philosophy and democratic governance, including debates about the compatibility of Islamic and Western constitutional frameworks, are beyond the scope of this chapter. What can be said with confidence is that the procedural and substantive values that underlie the legislative reform agenda described here, accountability, transparency, protection of fundamental rights, legitimate authority, and proportional use of force, are not values foreign to Islamic political tradition. They are, in their essentials, values that Islamic jurisprudence has articulated and refined across fourteen centuries of legal scholarship.

CONCLUSION TO PART THIRTEEN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

The analysis developed across sixteen chapters of Part Thirteen arrives at a conclusion that is simultaneously modest and ambitious. Modest, because it recognizes that legislation alone cannot transform Bangladesh's defense governance: institutional culture, political will, civic engagement, professional expertise, and sustained implementation effort are all equally necessary. Ambitious, because it insists that the legislative framework described here is not merely desirable but essential: without it, Bangladesh cannot achieve the democratic defense governance that its constitutional commitments require, its citizens deserve, and its strategic ambitions demand.

The core legislative agenda is clear. Bangladesh needs a National Security Council Act that places the highest-level security decision-making process on a statutory basis with clear membership, mandate, and accountability provisions. It needs a Parliamentary Defense Committee Act that gives the committee the statutory powers, the security-cleared staff, and the audit jurisdiction necessary for genuine oversight. It needs an Intelligence Services Act that places the intelligence agencies on a statutory basis with defined mandates, judicial warrant requirements, and independent oversight mechanisms. It needs a Defense Procurement Act that establishes competitive tendering, independent technical evaluation, parliamentary oversight thresholds, and anti-corruption provisions. It needs a Military Justice Reform Act that establishes genuine judicial independence, codifies the rights of military accused, and extends civilian criminal jurisdiction over military abuses of civilians. It needs a Border Security Act that provides a unified legislative framework for all dimensions of Bangladesh's complex border

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

security challenge. And it needs a National Defense Act that consolidates all of these provisions into a coherent, constitutionally grounded statutory framework for democratic defense governance.

It also needs constitutional amendments: a parliamentary war powers provision, a constitutionally mandated defense committee, a defense white paper requirement, a constitutional right against arbitrary surveillance, and a constitutional affirmation of the CAG's jurisdiction over defense. These constitutional changes would transform Bangladesh's existing skeletal defense governance constitution into a genuine framework of democratic defense law.

The process of achieving this legislative agenda is as important as its content. An inclusive, consultative, transparent drafting process, engaging civil society, academia, the legal profession, the media, and the defense community itself, will produce legislation that is better designed, more widely understood, and more politically sustainable than legislation drafted behind closed doors by governmental actors pursuing institutional interests.

The timing is critical. The constitutional moment created by the July Revolution of 2024, sustained through the reform process of 2025, and institutionalized in the February 2026 elections and referendum, provides an opportunity that is historically rare. Bangladesh's politicians, lawyers, academics, civil society leaders, and military professionals must seize this opportunity with the intellectual seriousness and political courage that the moment demands.

The vision that Part Thirteen advances is of an Bangladesh where the armed forces are genuine servants of the democratic republic, where intelligence agencies operate within clear legal mandates and under effective democratic oversight, where defense procurement is competitive, transparent, and accountable, where military justice is genuinely just, where the parliament exercises meaningful control over decisions of war and peace, and where every citizen can be confident that the institutions entrusted with the nation's defense serve the nation's interests rather than their own.

This vision is not utopian. Every element of it exists, in various forms and with varying degrees of success, in democratic states around the world. Some of those states are large and wealthy; others are small and resource-constrained, facing threats at least as serious as those Bangladesh confronts. What they share is the political will to hold their defense institutions accountable to democratic law, and the institutional commitment to build the capacities necessary to make that accountability real. Bangladesh can join their ranks. Part Thirteen has tried to show how.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART THIRTEEN

Constitutional Theory and Democratic Defense Governance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Ackerman, Bruce. We the People: Foundations. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991.

Ackerman, Bruce. We the People: Transformations. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998.

Agamben, Giorgio. State of Exception. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Dyzenhaus, David. The Constitution of Law: Legality in a Time of Emergency. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Rawls, John. A Theory of Justice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Sandel, Michael. Liberalism and the Limits of Justice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Walzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations. New York: Basic Books, 1977.

Comparative Defense Legislation

Feaver, Peter. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Bruneau, Thomas and Scott Tollefson, editors. Who Guards the Guardians and How: Democratic Civil-Military Relations. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Born, Hans and Ian Leigh. Making Intelligence Accountable: Legal Standards and Best Practice for Oversight of Intelligence Agencies. Oslo: Publishing House of the Norwegian Parliament, 2005.

Fluri, Philipp and Viorel Cibotaru, editors. Defence Institution Building: Country Profiles and Needs Assessments for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine. Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2007.

Greenwood, Christopher. Essays on War in International Law. London: Cameron May, 2006.

Huntington, Samuel. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957.

Janowitz, Morris. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Bangladesh Legislative and Constitutional Sources

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh. Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, as amended. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh, 2011.

Bangladesh. Army Act, 1952. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh. Border Guard Bangladesh Act, 2010. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh. National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009. Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh.

Human Rights Watch. After the Monsoon Revolution: A Roadmap to Lasting Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh. New York: Human Rights Watch, January 2025.

International Crisis Group. A New Era in Bangladesh? The First Hundred Days of Reform. Brussels: International Crisis Group, November 2024.

The Daily Star. Key Legislative Reforms of 2025 in Bangladesh. Dhaka: The Daily Star, January 2026.

Intelligence Law and Oversight

Aldrich, Richard and Christopher Moran, editors. Fin de Siecle: The Intelligence Services in the Twenty-First Century. London: Taylor and Francis, 2009.

Betts, Richard. Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge and Power in American National Security. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Gill, Peter and Mark Phythian. Intelligence in an Insecure World. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.

United Kingdom. The Intelligence and Security Committee Annual Report. London: HMSO, various years.

Military Justice Reform

Fidell, Eugene, Dwight Sullivan, and Dickson Phillips. Military Justice: Cases and Materials. Newark: LexisNexis, 2007.

Schlueter, David. Military Criminal Justice: Practice and Procedure. Newark: LexisNexis, 2012.

Rones, Nina and Torunn Laugen Haaland. A Model for the Future? Norwegian Military Culture and the Challenges of Modern Civil-Military Relations. Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, 2015.

Defense Procurement Reform

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Barany, Zoltan. The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Hartley, Keith. The Economics of Defence Policy: A New Perspective. London: Routledge, 2011.

Trybus, Martin. European Union Law and Defence Integration. Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2005.

Islamic Jurisprudence and Political Philosophy

Ramadan, Tariq. Western Muslims and the Future of Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Al-Mawardi, Abu al-Hasan. The Ordinances of Government (Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya). Translated by Wafaa Wahba. London: Garnet Publishing, 1996.

Khadduri, Majid. War and Peace in the Law of Islam. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955.

Esposito, John and John Voll. Islam and Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Bangladesh Defense Development, 2024 to 2026

Bangladesh Military Forces. Ideal Defence Policy for Bangladesh by 2040. Dhaka: bdmilitary.com, April 2025.

Bangladesh Military Forces. Bangladesh's $75 Billion Defence Modernisation Proposal, 2026 to 2040. Dhaka: bdmilitary.com, June 2025.

Bangladesh Defence Journal. Bangladesh's Defense Budget and Purchases at a Glance. Dhaka: defencejournalbd.com, December 2025.

The Diplomat. Revisiting Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh's Military Modernization Plan Under the New Government. Washington: The Diplomat, December 2024.

SSRN. Dipu, Ahmad M. Rethinking Bangladesh's National Defense Policy in the Wake of the Students-People's Uprising. November 2025.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Bangladesh Parliamentary Election and National Referendum: February 2026. Washington: IFES, February 2026.

Wikipedia. Forces Goal 2030. Updated February 2026.

End of Part Thirteen

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Fourteen will address the operational dimensions of Bangladesh's defense transformation in the Indo-Pacific era: the specific strategic choices, capability priorities, doctrine revisions, and alliance management decisions that will determine whether Bangladesh achieves the deterrence posture and the strategic autonomy that its national interest requires over the decade from 2026 to 2036. Part Fourteen will engage in detail with the theater of competition in the Bay of Bengal, the management of Bangladesh's relationships with India, China, the United States, and the rising middle powers of the Indo-Pacific, the force structure implications of the $75 billion modernization framework, and the doctrine for hybrid warfare, gray zone operations, and multi-domain defense that Bangladesh must develop to protect itself in the security environment of the mid-twenty-first century. It will also draft a comprehensive Model Defense White Paper for Bangladesh, representing the culminating policy document toward which the entire textbook's analytical architecture has been building.

Part Fifteen will present the pedagogy and curriculum architecture for defense studies in Bangladesh: how to build the academic and professional education system that democratic defense governance requires, from undergraduate security studies programs through professional military education to civilian defense expertise development in government, civil society, and the private sector.

Part Sixteen will provide the philosophical synthesis of the entire sixteen-part textbook: a comprehensive statement of the principles, values, and strategic vision that should animate Bangladesh's defense policy in the twenty-first century, and a final assessment of the distance between Bangladesh's current reality and the democratic defense governance that its constitution promises and its citizens deserve.

PART FOURTEEN: OPERATIONAL STRATEGY, FORCE TRANSFORMATION, ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT, AND THE MODEL DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: BANGLADESH IN THE INDO-PACIFIC ERA, 2026 TO 2036

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART FOURTEEN

The thirteen parts that precede this one have constructed, through successive layers of philosophical, historical, legal, comparative, and institutional analysis, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing Bangladesh's defense policy. Part One built the philosophical and theoretical architecture. Parts Two through Seven examined operational

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

doctrine, force structure, maritime strategy, legislative architecture, intelligence, and internal security. Parts Eight through Ten addressed technology, defense industry, and emerging capabilities. Parts Eleven and Twelve examined peacekeeping and UN diplomacy in depth. Part Thirteen provided the comprehensive legislative reform roadmap that democratic defense governance requires.

Part Fourteen now enters the most immediately operational domain of this textbook's inquiry: the specific strategic choices, force transformation priorities, alliance management decisions, and doctrinal developments that will determine Bangladesh's actual security posture over the decade from 2026 to 2036. It does so with the full benefit of the analytical architecture developed in the preceding thirteen parts, drawing on that foundation to evaluate Bangladesh's current trajectory and to articulate the strategic vision that a coherent defense policy requires.

The timing of this analysis is defined by three historically significant convergences. First, the February 2026 parliamentary elections have installed a new Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government inheriting the most ambitious defense modernization program in Bangladesh's history, a rapidly deteriorating and then cautiously recovering relationship with India, and a defense partnership architecture with China, Turkey, Japan, and Italy that is simultaneously more diverse and more strategically complicated than at any previous moment. Second, the regional security environment has been transformed by the ongoing Myanmar civil conflict, the April to May 2025 India-Pakistan military confrontation whose electronic warfare lessons reverberated across South Asian defense establishments, and the intensifying US-China competition for influence in the Bay of Bengal. Third, the global strategic environment has been reshaped by the 2025 US National Security Strategy's explicit focus on the Indo-Pacific, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict's continuing lessons about modern warfare, and the acceleration of autonomous systems, electronic warfare, and artificial intelligence as operational realities rather than future possibilities.

Against this backdrop, Part Fourteen makes the case for a specific strategic vision: Bangladesh as a sovereign, non-aligned, strategically autonomous state pursuing sophisticated deterrence through capability diversification, hybrid defense doctrine, and carefully calibrated alliance management, within an explicitly Indo-Pacific strategic framework that acknowledges both the necessity and the limits of great power engagement. It concludes with the Model Bangladesh Defense White Paper, the culminating policy document toward which the entire textbook's analytical architecture has been building.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BNP GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE INHERITANCE AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1.1 The February 2026 Transition and Its Defense Policy Implications

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party government that took office on February 17, 2026, following the parliamentary elections of February 12, inherited a defense policy landscape that was

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

simultaneously more advanced, more complicated, and more diplomatically charged than any previous Bangladeshi government had faced. Throughout 2025 and into early 2026, the interim government under Muhammad Yunus pursued an assertive and outward-looking defense strategy, engaging with partners from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Pakistan, Turkey, and other Western nations to secure advanced military hardware ranging from combat aircraft and missile systems to warships, submarines, and unmanned platforms. Bdmilitary The BNP government therefore inherited not a blank slate but a complex matrix of commitments, letters of intent, framework agreements, and procurement negotiations at various stages of completion.

The BNP's own manifesto places defense and border security at the forefront of its national priorities, emphasizing the development of a strong, modern, and professional armed force, enhanced maritime security in the Bay of Bengal, improved border surveillance capabilities, and the strengthening of air defense and cyber warfare capacity. Bdmilitary These priorities are consistent with, and in some respects more ambitious than, the trajectory established by the Forces Goal 2030 program and its post-July 2024 revisions. But manifesto commitments and actual policy are always different things, and the BNP government faces fiscal constraints, diplomatic complications, and institutional resistance that will test its ability to translate defense ambition into operational reality.

The most immediate challenge is the relationship with India. Relations between Bangladesh and India were under severe strain for eighteen months in the aftermath of the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government in August 2024, with mutual suspicions increasing by the day and political, diplomatic, and intelligence relations souring. The Diplomat The murder of student uprising leader Sharif Osman Hadi in December 2025, and the subsequent allegations linking the attack to Indian-connected actors, brought the relationship to what observers described as its lowest point since 1971. Yet the structural interdependencies between the two countries, and the mutual recognition that prolonged hostility serves neither party's interests, created the conditions for a cautious thaw.

Less than a week after the BNP-led government took charge on February 17, Bangladesh's newly appointed DGFI chief made contact with Indian security counterparts, indicating a reopening of security channels that had been effectively frozen during the transition period. By March 2026, India supplied approximately 5,000 tons of diesel to Bangladesh via the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline, underscoring the interdependence that continues to shape relations between the countries. The Diplomat The BNP government's early signals suggest a genuine desire to manage, rather than weaponize, the India relationship, which represents a significant and strategically important moderation of the anti-India rhetoric that characterized much of the interim government period.

The second challenge is the defense budget reality. Defense spending for the 2025-26 fiscal year is approximately 40,698 crore taka, representing a slight decrease in total allocation compared to the previous cycle, reflecting a policy of fiscal restraint while prioritizing essential maintenance and border security. Global Military A defense budget constrained by fiscal austerity cannot simultaneously sustain existing operational costs, fund the Forces Goal 2030 modernization program, and meet the payment schedules of the enormous acquisition commitments made

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

during the interim government period. The BNP government will need to make genuine prioritization decisions, and those decisions will reveal the real hierarchy of its defense priorities in ways that its manifesto cannot.

1.2 The Indo-Pakistan Conflict of April to May 2025 and Its Strategic Lessons for Bangladesh

Among the most consequential events affecting Bangladesh's defense thinking in the recent period is the India-Pakistan military confrontation of April to May 2025. While this conflict was brief, limited in geographic scope, and resolved through diplomatic intervention before escalating to full-scale conventional warfare, its operational lessons have reverberated across South Asian defense establishments with an intensity that makes it impossible to ignore in any serious discussion of Bangladesh's defense doctrine.

The April to May 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict underscored the transformational role of electronic warfare in contemporary combat operations. The Pakistan Army's successful deployment of integrated electronic warfare assets allowed it to disrupt the Indian Army's Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance systems, nullify technological advantages, and degrade operational tempo. For Bangladesh, bordered by both India and Myanmar, this experience serves as a critical point of reflection. Bdmilitary

The lessons are multiple and interconnected. The first is the decisive importance of electronic warfare as a force multiplier and a force negator. A state that can systematically disrupt its adversary's communications, navigation, and sensor networks before or during the opening phase of a conventional military engagement gains an asymmetric advantage that may offset substantial differences in raw military capability. The Pakistan Army's success in this dimension of the April 2025 confrontation surprised many analysts who had assessed India's electronic warfare advantage as decisive.

The second lesson is the continued centrality of drones and unmanned systems in modern conflict. Both sides deployed unmanned platforms extensively in the April 2025 confrontation, including Turkish Bayraktar TB2 derivatives in Pakistani service and Indian-developed drones of multiple types, with outcomes that further confirmed the drone's role as a decisive operational tool at all levels of warfare. Bangladesh, which has acquired TB2 drones and is investigating further unmanned platforms, has particular reason to study this operational experience closely.

The third lesson is the importance of integrated air defense architecture. The ability to deny adversary airpower from operating effectively is, as the April 2025 confrontation demonstrated yet again, a foundational requirement of credible conventional deterrence. A state that cannot defend its airspace cannot defend itself effectively in any other dimension of modern warfare.

For Bangladesh specifically, these lessons translate into concrete capability requirements that the Forces Goal 2030 program, revised after the July Revolution, must address. The electronic warfare gap is particularly pressing. This report outlines the necessity of raising a dedicated Electronic Warfare Brigade to enhance Bangladesh's deterrence posture, ensure effective area denial, and support joint-force operations, drawing from doctrinal sources including the National

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Defence College, and proposing a force structure adapted to Bangladesh's unique geography, hybrid warfare requirements, and modern security environment. Bdmilitary

1.3 The $75 Billion Vision and Its Political Economy

The proposed $75 billion defense modernization program of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, spanning from 2026 to 2040, marks a profound shift in Dhaka's military doctrine, force posture, and international partnerships, structured across a tri-service transformation that envisions an integrated military with advanced network-centric warfare capabilities, strategic deterrence assets, and indigenous defense industrial development. Bdmilitary

This vision, while strategically coherent and operationally ambitious, faces a political economy challenge of the first order. Bangladesh's entire GDP in 2025 is approximately $460 billion, meaning that the proposed $75 billion defense modernization over fifteen years represents roughly 16 percent of current annual GDP, or more than one percent of GDP per year in defense capital investment above current operational spending. For a country still classifying as a lower-middle-income state and pursuing the development ambitions of the 2041 vision, this level of defense investment is politically and economically challenging.

The political economy challenge is compounded by the financing structure of major procurement programs. The Eurofighter Typhoon acquisition, estimated at $2.5 to $3 billion, the J-10CE acquisition at approximately $2.2 billion, the planned naval frigate construction program, the electronic warfare and missile system investments, and the air defense modernization collectively represent financial commitments that will require either concessional government-to-government financing, domestic borrowing, or reallocation from development spending. Each of these financing options carries different political, economic, and strategic costs.

The BNP government must therefore make a strategic choice that no previous Bangladeshi government has ever been required to make so explicitly: what level of defense investment is appropriate for a state of Bangladesh's size, wealth, and strategic position? This question is not merely economic. It is a fundamental statement about national priorities, about the relationship between security and development, and about the kind of state that Bangladesh aspires to be. The Model Defense White Paper developed in Chapter Sixteen of this part addresses this question directly, but the political economy analysis here establishes the framework within which that discussion occurs.

CHAPTER TWO: THE INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND BANGLADESH'S POSITION

2.1 The Indo-Pacific as Strategic Concept: Content, Contestation, and Bangladesh's Place

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Indo-Pacific, as a strategic concept, has evolved over the past decade from an academic construct to the organizing framework of US, Australian, Japanese, and Indian security policy. The concept's core claim is that the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific constitute an integrated strategic space, connected by the sea lanes through which the vast majority of global trade flows, and that the management of security in this integrated space requires a coordinated strategic approach that treats it as a whole rather than as separate regional theaters.

For Bangladesh, the Indo-Pacific framework is simultaneously an opportunity and a pressure. As an opportunity, it positions Bangladesh, sitting at the apex of the Bay of Bengal on the critical maritime corridor connecting the Indian Ocean to East and Southeast Asia, as a strategically significant state whose partnership is sought by major powers. Bangladesh's relevance lies in its landmass, known as the Northern Bay of Bengal Maritime Crossroads, because it is where all routes to shipping lines in East Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East converge. Approximately ninety percent of all world maritime trade reaches or passes through the Bay of Bengal. The maritime backbones of Bangladesh include Chattagram, Mongla Sea Ports, and the new deep sea port at Matarbari that is being globally sought after by leading world powers such as India, China, the USA, Japan, and the EU in search of new routes that could be part of the Indo-Pacific supply chain. The Financial Express

As a pressure, the Indo-Pacific framework creates demands on Bangladesh to choose sides in the US-China competition, to align with the Western security architecture in ways that may compromise its relationship with China, or to be treated as a passive object of great power competition rather than as an agent of its own strategic destiny. The US National Security Strategy 2025 emphasizes a strengthened military and strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on the First Island Chain, allies' ports and defense spending, and protection of the Taiwan-centered First Island Chain while ensuring the region remains accessible to US economic and strategic interests. Dhaka Tribune The US strategy's explicit orientation toward the First Island Chain and Taiwan suggests a primary focus on maritime East Asia, but its emphasis on securing partner access to ports and facilities has direct implications for Bangladesh, whose Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, and Matarbari facilities are precisely the kind of assets that the US strategic architecture would seek to leverage.

The fundamental question for Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific strategy is how to maximize the benefits of being a strategically desirable partner, attracting investment, technology transfer, and security cooperation, while minimizing the costs of being drawn into great power competition in ways that threaten its security relationships with China, compromise its non-aligned status, or provoke an adverse response from India, whose own positioning in the Indo-Pacific framework is deeply important to Bangladesh's security environment.

With the interim government's renewed focus on accountability and regional as well as international diplomacy, Bangladesh's position in the politics of the Bay of Bengal has been enhanced. The pragmatic doctrine of friendship to all and malice toward none has enabled Bangladesh to keep itself intact for the past several decades, but the arrival of a divided world order amid rising strategic competition among global powers makes it imperative for Bangladesh to realign its foreign policy within a smarter framework of independent non-alignment. The Financial Express

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.2 The United States Relationship: GSOMIA, ACSA, and the Limits of Engagement

The US-Bangladesh defense relationship has been, for most of Bangladesh's independent history, significant but not decisive. The United States is Bangladesh's largest export market, an important source of foreign direct investment, a major provider of military training and capacity building, and a potential arms supplier of great significance if political and financial conditions allow. But Bangladesh has never been, and under any foreseeable scenario is unlikely to become, a formal US ally, and the asymmetry between what the United States seeks from the relationship and what Bangladesh is prepared to offer has been a persistent source of tension.

Since the US Indo-Pacific Strategy was envisioned in 2017 and codified in 2019, Dhaka has faced a relentless diplomatic effort by Washington. Over twenty high-level delegations have arrived to secure Bangladesh's signature on pacts that Washington views as essential for the containment of China. This campaign moved from abstract concepts to a concrete roadmap in March 2022, when the then US Secretary of State Victoria Nuland delivered a draft of the General Security of Military Information Agreement to Dhaka. The Diplomat

The debate within Bangladesh about whether to sign these foundational defense agreements, particularly the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), is among the most consequential ongoing strategic conversations in the country's recent history. The substantive arguments on both sides deserve serious analysis.

The arguments for signing GSOMIA are compelling. GSOMIA is, at its core, a framework for sharing classified military information. For Bangladesh, whose defense modernization program increasingly involves Western systems, platforms, and technologies, the ability to access classified technical information about the systems it operates and the interoperability that comes from shared information frameworks is a genuine military capability asset. GSOMIA does not require Bangladesh to take any military action, align itself with any military bloc, or accept any constraint on its sovereign decision-making.

The arguments for caution about ACSA are more compelling. Cox's Bazar Airport has been upgraded from a domestic facility to an international one via the construction of a maritime runway, specifically designed to allow wide-body aircraft and heavy transport planes to land at the edge of the Bay of Bengal. Under ACSA, the airport could effectively serve as a refueling node for foreign warplanes. If a US carrier strike group or bombers operating in the Bay of Bengal treat Cox's Bazar as a fueling station, Bangladesh's friendship to all policy will become a historical footnote, since by providing the fuel that powers a foreign military's reach, Dhaka will cease to be a neutral bystander and become a logistical participant in geopolitical conflicts. The Diplomat

This analysis, while analytically sharp, may overstate the risk of ACSA in isolation. Acquisition and cross-servicing agreements are standard bilateral logistics arrangements that dozens of states have with the United States, including many that maintain active relationships with China and pursue formally non-aligned foreign policies. The critical factor is not the agreement itself but

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the political will and legal mechanisms to ensure that the agreement is invoked only for purposes consistent with Bangladesh's non-aligned posture. The proposed legislative reforms in Part Thirteen, particularly the parliamentary war powers provision and the requirement for parliamentary authorization of foreign military access to Bangladeshi facilities, would provide precisely the kind of domestic legal constraint that makes ACSA manageable without making Bangladesh a de facto US military ally.

The strategic recommendation that emerges from this analysis is a differentiated approach: Bangladesh should sign GSOMIA, which provides genuine military capability benefits without strategic alignment costs, while negotiating ACSA subject to parliamentary approval and with specific provisions limiting its applicability to clearly humanitarian and disaster relief operations. This differentiated approach is consistent with Bangladesh's strategic autonomy principle and with the BNP government's manifesto commitment to a balanced foreign policy.

The purpose of a more ambitious US-Bangladesh strategy should not be to win Dhaka away from Beijing, but to keep open a multi-vector future: one in which Bangladesh can modernize without locking into a Chinese security architecture; India's sense of encirclement is mitigated rather than inflamed; and the United States gains rather than loses options in the Bay of Bengal. War on the Rocks This formulation, from a recent analysis of US policy toward Bangladesh, captures precisely the strategic logic that should govern Bangladesh's own approach: not a choice between Washington and Beijing, but the deliberate maintenance of strategic flexibility that serves Bangladesh's own interests.

2.3 The China Relationship: Dependency, Diversification, and Strategic Entanglement

China is Bangladesh's largest arms supplier, its largest trading partner, a major infrastructure investor through the Belt and Road Initiative, and the primary financer of several of Bangladesh's most significant development projects. This multidimensional relationship creates strategic dependencies that have both benefits and costs, and the management of those dependencies is among the most demanding challenges of Bangladesh's defense and foreign policy.

The arms dependency dimension is the most directly relevant to defense policy. Bangladesh's navy is built almost entirely around Chinese platforms: the Ming-class submarines, the Type 053 frigates, the Type 056 corvettes, and numerous patrol vessels. The army's main battle tanks and significant portions of its artillery and air defense inventory are Chinese-origin. The air force's fighter fleet is predominantly Chinese, from the F-7BGI to the Yak-130 trainer, with the pending J-10CE acquisition deepening rather than reducing this dependency.

China's sale of two Type 035G Ming-class submarines to Bangladesh in 2016 paved the way for Chinese submarine crews to be posted to Bangladesh for training purposes, allowing the Chinese Navy to gradually increase the presence of its personnel and Chinese-sourced hardware in the Bay of Bengal's littoral states, which increases the competitiveness of its gray zone strategy in the region. Center for International Maritime Security This analysis, from the Center for International Maritime Security, highlights a dimension of the China arms relationship that purely transactional analysis misses: the procurement of Chinese platforms is not merely a

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

commercial transaction but a form of strategic entanglement that gives China ongoing access to Bangladeshi military facilities and operational information.

The diversification drive of the post-July 2024 period represents a genuine and strategically important effort to reduce this dependency. The Eurofighter Typhoon Letter of Intent with Italy's Leonardo, the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drone procurement and the ongoing discussions about the SIPER long-range air defense system, the Japan defense technology transfer agreement of February 2026, the South Korean engagement on naval platforms, and the Pakistan JF-17 discussions all represent efforts to create a more diversified supply architecture that reduces the strategic vulnerability created by overwhelming dependence on a single supplier.

Bangladesh's military modernization is not aimed at threatening India, but at ensuring Bangladesh's own security amid rising tensions in the Bay of Bengal as well as the growing militarization of the Indo-Pacific. Dhaka has been seeking a balanced approach under the framework of its traditional foreign policy: friend to all, malice toward none. Bangladesh is maintaining ties with both India and China while actively diversifying its defense partnerships with Turkey, South Korea, and European countries. The Diplomat

The critical strategic judgment that Bangladesh's defense planners must make is where the line between productive diversification and counterproductive fragmentation lies. A military with equipment from twelve different countries, each requiring different spare parts, different maintenance protocols, different training regimes, and different logistics chains, is not necessarily more capable than one with equipment from three or four suppliers with coherent interoperability arrangements. The goal of diversification must be to reduce strategic dependency and expand political flexibility, not to maximize the number of supplier relationships for its own sake.

The most strategically sound approach to China diversification is a tiered one. Tier One systems, those most critical for national survival and strategic deterrence, should progressively migrate toward suppliers whose political alignment with Bangladesh's security interests is reliable over the long term. This tier includes the submarine fleet, the air defense architecture, and the advanced fighter inventory. Tier Two systems, those important but less strategically critical, can maintain a mixed Chinese and non-Chinese composition, managed for interoperability through deliberate procurement planning. Tier Three systems, routine equipment, vehicles, small arms, and logistics materials, can continue to be sourced from the most cost-effective supplier, which may often remain China.

2.4 The Matarbari Deep Sea Port and Its Strategic Dimensions

The Matarbari deep sea port project, constructed with Japanese financing and expected to become operational in the late 2020s, is arguably the single most strategically significant infrastructure investment in Bangladesh's recent history. Physically, it provides Bangladesh with a deep water port capable of accommodating the largest commercial vessels currently operating, transforming Bangladesh's capacity to handle the cargo volumes that its growing economy requires. Strategically, it positions Bangladesh at the center of one of the most contested infrastructure competitions in the Indo-Pacific.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Matarbari deep sea port is being globally sought after by leading world powers such as India, China, the USA, Japan, and the EU in search of new routes that could be part of the Indo-Pacific supply chain. The Financial Express Japan's financing of the port is not merely a developmental gesture; it is a deliberate strategic investment by Tokyo in its effort to build the infrastructure architecture of the free and open Indo-Pacific framework, creating an alternative to the Chinese-financed port infrastructure in Hambantota, Kyaukphyu, and Gwadar that has generated such strategic concern.

For Bangladesh, Matarbari's strategic value is both an asset and a responsibility. The port gives Bangladesh significant leverage in its engagement with major powers, all of whom have reasons to want access to or at least influence over this facility. But it also makes Bangladesh a more significant object of great power competition, increasing the pressure to align and the cost of remaining neutral. The governance framework for Matarbari, ensuring that it remains a commercial facility serving Bangladesh's economic interests rather than becoming a platform for any particular power's military access, is among the most important single diplomatic and legal tasks that Bangladesh's government faces.

The port's relationship to Bangladesh's defense strategy requires specific attention. The protection of Matarbari as a critical national infrastructure asset must figure prominently in Bangladesh's maritime defense doctrine. The approach to the port, the waters of the Bay of Bengal in its immediate vicinity, and the logistics chains that service it are all targets that a sophisticated adversary might seek to threaten in a conflict scenario. Bangladesh's naval development program must include specific capabilities oriented toward port protection and sea lane security in the approaches to Matarbari, and the broader maritime defense framework must treat the port as a strategic asset requiring dedicated protection planning.

CHAPTER THREE: THE INDIA RELATIONSHIP: STRATEGIC RESET AFTER THE CRISIS

3.1 The Structural Sources of Bangladesh-India Tension

The Bangladesh-India relationship has passed, between August 2024 and the spring of 2026, through its most turbulent period since independence. Understanding the structural sources of this turbulence, as distinct from its immediate triggers, is essential to designing a Bangladesh defense policy that navigates the India relationship with strategic sophistication rather than reactive emotionalism.

Bangladesh and India remain bound by geography, economics, energy networks, and security imperatives. These structural realities cannot be undone by rhetorical escalation, episodic border tensions, or temporary diplomatic freezes. Yet global experience also shows that even highly interdependent neighbors can slide into prolonged hostility when domestic legitimacy crises, identity politics, and external opportunism converge. Khabarhub

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The structural sources of tension are several. The first is the geographic encirclement dynamic: India shares borders with Bangladesh on three sides, creating in Bangladeshi political consciousness a persistent sense of strategic vulnerability that Indian policy has sometimes exploited and rarely adequately addressed. The "chicken's neck" corridor through Siliguri, connecting India's northeastern states to the rest of the country, creates a reciprocal vulnerability that gives Bangladesh some limited structural leverage but also makes India particularly sensitive to any development in Bangladesh that might threaten the security of this narrow corridor.

For fifteen years, India enjoyed a secure eastern border, and India now fears that a less cooperative government in Dhaka will allow insurgent groups to revive their activities in India's Northeast. The Siliguri Corridor feels more vulnerable today than it has in decades. Eurasia Review This Indian fear, whatever its precise validity, is a structural driver of Indian policy toward Bangladesh that the BNP government must understand and address with the sophistication that strategic management requires.

The second structural source of tension is the water resources dimension. The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty, set to expire in December 2026, has seen negotiations stall due to the diplomatic frost. Furthermore, India's 2025 decision to modify parts of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan has made Dhaka nervous, with Bangladeshi officials fearing that India might use water as a tool of pressure during the dry season. Eurasia Review Water is, for Bangladesh, a matter of existential concern: the country's entire agricultural economy and much of its population's livelihood depend on the seasonal flows of rivers whose upstream conditions are controlled by India. The expiry of the Ganges Treaty in December 2026 makes the negotiation of a successor agreement among the most urgent diplomatic tasks facing the new BNP government.

The third structural source is the trade asymmetry. Bangladesh's trade relationship with India is deeply imbalanced, with India enjoying a massive trade surplus and Bangladesh struggling to access the Indian market for its exports, particularly garments, despite theoretical free trade arrangements. Economic tensions have risen, with a dispute over roughly $800 million owed to Adani Power leading the Indian firm to cut electricity supply to Bangladesh by half, and both countries imposing reciprocal restrictions on road-based trade. The Business Standard The weaponization of trade and energy relationships as instruments of diplomatic pressure is a deeply corrosive feature of an asymmetric bilateral relationship, and it represents a form of what strategists call gray zone activity: the use of economic coercion to achieve political objectives short of military confrontation.

3.2 The Strategic Reset: What Bangladesh Needs and What It Can Offer

The new BNP government has both the motivation and the opportunity to pursue a strategic reset of the India relationship. The motivation is clear: continued deterioration of the relationship threatens Bangladesh's energy security (through the Adani dispute and pipeline arrangements), its trade interests (through reciprocal restrictions), and its border security (through reduced intelligence cooperation at a time when the Myanmar threat remains active). The opportunity exists because India's own strategic interests have led New Delhi toward a pragmatic engagement with the new Bangladeshi reality.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

India's Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar handed over a letter of condolence from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tarique Rahman, then the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, following the death of his mother and former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, signaling Indian readiness to engage with the BNP as a legitimate political interlocutor. The Diplomat This gesture, politically significant in its symbolism, opened the door to the diplomatic engagement that has characterized the early weeks of the BNP government's tenure.

What Bangladesh specifically needs from the reset is a package of concrete deliverables that addresses the most immediate structural grievances: a successor water-sharing treaty for the Ganges that provides adequate dry-season flows, restoration of normal visa services, resolution of the Adani power supply dispute, and a commitment to reduce BSF killings at the border, which have been a persistent source of grievance and diplomatic tension.

What Bangladesh can offer in return is equally concrete: credible assurances that its territory will not be used as a base for insurgent activities against India's northeastern states, intelligence cooperation on genuine cross-border security threats, cooperation on the management of the Rohingya refugee situation, and a commitment to engage constructively on BIMSTEC regional connectivity projects. It can also offer, though this is politically sensitive, a degree of restraint in its engagement with Pakistan and China that reassures India without requiring Bangladesh to subordinate its sovereign right to manage those relationships as its own interests dictate.

The defense policy implication of the India relationship reset is significant. A functional, stable India-Bangladesh relationship is a prerequisite for Bangladesh's ability to address its other strategic challenges, particularly Myanmar, without Indian obstruction or interference. If India is actively concerned about Bangladesh's security posture, it may take measures, including intelligence operations, border restriction, or support for opposition political forces, that complicate Bangladesh's security environment rather than stabilizing it. A Bangladesh that has managed the India relationship to a state of cooperative coexistence is a Bangladesh that is strategically freer to pursue its other interests.

3.3 The BSF Killings and the Border Security Dimension

No analysis of the India-Bangladesh strategic relationship can be complete without addressing the border killing issue, which has been among the most persistent and most corrosive features of the relationship for two decades. The Indian Border Security Force's practice of shooting and killing Bangladeshi civilians attempting to cross the border, often unarmed individuals crossing for economic or family reasons rather than security threats, has generated enormous grievance in Bangladesh without achieving any strategic benefit for India.

The 4,096-kilometer border remains a major source of tension. Despite earlier commitments to reduce fatalities, the Indian Border Security Force continues to kill and injure Bangladeshi civilians along the frontier, with Bangladeshi officials saying their forces have taken a firmer stance on fencing, blocking BSF construction within 150 yards of the boundary, an area restricted under a 1975 agreement. In mid-2025, India began expelling thousands of Muslims to Bangladesh, citing illegal immigration, with Dhaka protesting the move as unlawful and politically motivated. The Business Standard

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

From Bangladesh's defense policy perspective, the BSF killing issue illustrates the gray zone dimension of the India-Bangladesh relationship. India's use of lethal force against Bangladeshi civilians is not a conventional military operation; it operates below the threshold of armed conflict. But it inflames public opinion in Bangladesh, strengthens anti-India political forces, and creates the conditions for the kind of radicalization that ultimately threatens both countries' security. The appropriate response from Bangladesh is not a reciprocal escalation but a sustained diplomatic and legal campaign, including documentation through the proposed human rights monitoring framework and systematic bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and security levels, that imposes political costs on India for continuing the practice.

The BNP government's defense and diplomatic strategy must include a specific, sustained, and multi-level effort to address the border killing issue. This effort should involve, at the diplomatic level, formal bilateral mechanisms for incident investigation and accountability; at the legal level, international human rights mechanisms and bilateral legal instruments that create accountability frameworks; and at the political level, the cultivation of Indian domestic opinion against the killings, including through engagement with Indian civil society organizations and media that share Bangladesh's concern about the human rights dimensions of the issue.

CHAPTER FOUR: GRAY ZONE WARFARE AND HYBRID DEFENSE DOCTRINE FOR BANGLADESH

4.1 Bangladesh's Specific Gray Zone Vulnerabilities

The concept of gray zone warfare, examined theoretically in Part One of this textbook and in the context of specific theaters in subsequent parts, has very specific and concrete implications for Bangladesh's strategic situation. Gray zone operations, defined as the use of non-military or sub-conventional means to achieve strategic objectives without triggering the threshold of conventional armed conflict, are not merely a theoretical construct for Bangladesh. They describe the actual strategic environment in which Bangladesh operates.

Gray zone tactics include economic coercion, information campaigns, the use of proxy forces, cyber operations, salami-slicing territorial encroachments, and the manipulation of political processes. While Russia and China are the most systematic practitioners, the reality is that democracies also employ elements of hybrid strategy including sanctions, public diplomacy, and cyber operations, though typically with greater constraints. World Class Blogs

Bangladesh's vulnerability to gray zone operations derives from several structural features of its situation. The first is its information environment: a densely populated, digitally connected society with a highly polarized political landscape and a vibrant but sometimes unverifiable social media ecosystem is particularly vulnerable to information operations, including disinformation campaigns, that can amplify social divisions, undermine confidence in state institutions, and shape political outcomes in ways that serve external actors' interests.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The second vulnerability is economic dependency. Bangladesh's economy is extraordinarily dependent on a narrow range of external relationships: its garment exports go primarily to the United States and the European Union, its remittances come primarily from the Gulf states, and its development financing increasingly involves China. Any single one of these dependencies can be weaponized by a sophisticated adversary to create economic pressure without military action.

The third vulnerability is the Rohingya crisis and its border dimensions. The million-plus Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar district represent a humanitarian responsibility that Bangladesh cannot shed and a security vulnerability that its adversaries can exploit. Cross-border arms flows, the radicalization of refugee camp populations by extremist actors, and the potential for armed non-state groups operating in Myanmar's Rakhine State to use the refugee crisis as cover for operations in Bangladesh all represent gray zone threats that blend humanitarian and security dimensions in ways that are particularly difficult to address.

The proposal for a humanitarian corridor to resolve the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine was initially made by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres during his visit to Dhaka in March 2025, and was immediately picked up by Bangladeshi Foreign Advisor Tuhid Hossain and National Security Advisor Khalilur Rahman. Bangladesh has reached out to the Arakan Army, one of Myanmar's ethnic armed organizations that has taken control of most of Rakhine State, demanding that it include Rohingya representatives in the Rakhine government. Modern Diplomacy Bangladesh's proactive engagement with the Arakan Army on the Rohingya issue illustrates both the innovative possibilities and the risks of a more assertive gray zone diplomacy: the Arakan Army is an armed non-state actor engaged in a civil war, and Bangladesh's diplomatic engagement with it carries both strategic promise and significant political and legal complications.

4.2 Bangladesh's Gray Zone Exposures: A Theater Analysis

The Bay of Bengal represents the most critical theater for Bangladesh's gray zone exposure, and the dimensions of that exposure have been extensively analyzed in the academic and strategic literature that Part Six of this textbook drew upon. China's ceaseless endeavor to penetrate into the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka has been a maritime security challenge to rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. China's sale of submarines to Bangladesh and Myanmar has allowed Chinese Navy personnel to be posted to these nations for training purposes, gradually increasing the presence of its personnel and Chinese-sourced hardware in the Bay of Bengal's littoral states, which increases the competitiveness of its gray zone strategy in the region. Center for International Maritime Security

This analysis, from the Center for International Maritime Security, identifies a fundamental tension at the heart of Bangladesh's China defense relationship: the same Chinese equipment that enhances Bangladesh's conventional military capability simultaneously gives China gray zone leverage through the presence of Chinese training personnel, the dependency on Chinese spare parts and maintenance, and the information access that comes from operating Chinese-origin sensor and communication systems. Managing this tension is one of the most sophisticated challenges of Bangladesh's defense policy.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The information environment represents another critical gray zone theater. Bangladesh's National Defence College journal has identified that the Bangladesh Armed Forces should prioritize the establishment of a structured command, control, and coordination mechanism to augment the effectiveness of information warfare, aligning with strategic tiers to ensure coherence in actions, and noting the significance of Bangladesh's digital penetration and existing cyber vulnerabilities as creating both acute exposure to information threats and opportunities for strategic leveraging. Ndc

This analysis from Bangladesh's own defense academic establishment is particularly revealing: it acknowledges both the threat and the opportunity dimensions of information warfare. Bangladesh's high mobile internet penetration, its large diaspora active in international social media, and its significance as a source of international news and political commentary all create both vulnerabilities to hostile information operations and tools for Bangladesh's own strategic communication efforts.

4.3 The Bangladesh Hybrid Defense Doctrine: Core Elements

A Bangladesh-specific hybrid defense doctrine must be built on a realistic assessment of Bangladesh's capabilities and constraints, informed by the comparative experience examined in Part Two of this textbook, and calibrated to the specific gray zone threats that the theater analysis identifies. This section articulates the core elements of such a doctrine.

The first element is a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to gray zone threats. Gray zone operations by definition span the entire range of state instruments: military, intelligence, diplomatic, economic, and informational. Countering them requires coordination across all of these instruments, managed through the National Security Council structure proposed in Part Thirteen. The NSC's standing sub-committee on civil-military relations, proposed in Part Thirteen, should have a specific mandate to coordinate gray zone threat assessment and response across the relevant government agencies.

The second element is a resilience-first orientation. Against gray zone operations that seek to exploit social divisions, undermine institutional trust, and amplify instability, the most effective defense is the strengthening of the political and social resilience that denies the adversary the vulnerabilities it seeks to exploit. A society with strong democratic institutions, a trusted security sector, transparent governance, and a population that has confidence in the integrity of its political processes is fundamentally more resistant to gray zone manipulation than one with weak institutions, an abusive security sector, and deep political polarization. This insight establishes a direct connection between Bangladesh's domestic governance reform agenda and its national security: good governance is a component of national defense.

The third element is maritime domain awareness and denial capability. In the Bay of Bengal, gray zone competition takes primarily maritime forms: survey vessel operations, submarine incursions, fishing fleet deployments in disputed waters, and the gradual extension of maritime infrastructure that creates facts on the water. Bangladesh's response must prioritize maritime domain awareness: the ability to detect, identify, and track all activities in its EEZ and the waters of the Bay of Bengal adjacent to it. The coastal radar systems, maritime patrol aircraft, and naval

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

surface surveillance capabilities that Bangladesh has acquired under Forces Goal 2030 represent a foundation, but a foundation that needs significant supplementation.

The fourth element is a national information warfare capacity. The Bangladesh Armed Forces should prioritize developing a robust national information warfare doctrine, integrated capabilities, extensive human resource development, and seamless inter-agency coordination, with the establishment of a Cyber Command serving as an umbrella organization to address cyber, electronic warfare, and information domains. Ndc This recommendation from Bangladesh's National Defence College reflects a growing institutional awareness of the information warfare dimension of modern security competition. Translating this awareness into operational capability requires, among other things, the legal framework for information operations proposed in Part Thirteen, the intelligence capabilities to assess the information environment, and the trained personnel to execute information operations with both effectiveness and restraint.

The fifth element is economic resilience. Bangladesh's economic dependencies create gray zone vulnerabilities that purely military responses cannot address. Diversifying export markets, reducing dependence on any single source of remittances, developing alternative energy supply arrangements, and building domestic production capacity in critical sectors are all components of the economic resilience that a comprehensive gray zone defense doctrine requires. This economic dimension of defense policy is the responsibility not only of the Ministry of Defense but of the entire economic policymaking apparatus of the state.

4.4 The Electronic Warfare Brigade: A Specific Capability Requirement

The April to May 2025 India-Pakistan conflict's most direct and operationally relevant lesson for Bangladesh is the decisive importance of electronic warfare capability. This report proposes a force structure for a Bangladesh Electronic Warfare Brigade adapted to Bangladesh's unique geography, hybrid warfare requirements, and modern security environment, with the brigade designed to enhance Bangladesh's deterrence posture, ensure effective area denial, and support joint-force operations. Bdmilitary

The specific capability requirements that the proposed Electronic Warfare Brigade should address are as follows. The first is electronic intelligence, or ELINT: the systematic collection and analysis of adversary electronic emissions, enabling Bangladesh to build a detailed understanding of the electromagnetic environment in which it might need to operate and to identify the specific vulnerabilities in adversary electronic systems that can be exploited in conflict.

The second is jamming and electronic attack: the ability to disrupt adversary communications, navigation systems, and radar. The Pakistan Army's success in disrupting Indian C4ISR systems in April 2025 demonstrated that a smaller force with sophisticated electronic attack capabilities can significantly degrade a larger force's operational effectiveness. Bangladesh, facing potential adversaries with significantly superior conventional forces, has every incentive to invest in the asymmetric advantages that electronic warfare provides.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The third is electronic protection: the ability to protect Bangladesh's own communications, navigation, and sensor systems against adversary jamming and cyber attack. The increasing integration of digital systems into all military platforms means that electronic protection is not a specialist niche capability but a foundational requirement of every military system's operational effectiveness. The procurement of any new platform, whether combat aircraft, naval vessel, or ground vehicle, must include assessment of its electronic warfare survivability as a primary selection criterion.

The fourth is spectrum management: the coordination of Bangladesh's entire military electromagnetic spectrum usage to avoid fratricide, maximize operational effectiveness, and minimize vulnerability to exploitation. As Bangladesh's military acquires systems from increasingly diverse suppliers, the electromagnetic compatibility and spectrum management challenges multiply, requiring dedicated institutional management that the proposed Electronic Warfare Brigade would provide.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BAY OF BENGAL THEATER: MARITIME STRATEGY AND FORCE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Bay of Bengal as the Central Strategic Theater

The Bay of Bengal is Bangladesh's most important strategic theater: it is the maritime domain through which Bangladesh's trade flows, in which its EEZ resources are located, against which its most significant maritime threats are directed, and in which the great power competition most directly relevant to Bangladesh's security plays out. Part Six of this textbook examined the Bay of Bengal maritime strategy in considerable depth; this chapter builds on that analysis to address the specific force development requirements and doctrinal evolution of the 2026 to 2036 period.

The defense policy should be aligned with the evolving strategic landscape of both the immediate and extended region. Bangladesh's geography has always influenced its strategic thinking. While the priority on land is imminent, the strategic competition centering the Indo-Pacific region has made the operational environment in the maritime vicinity very uncertain, requiring the defense forces to stay prepared for potential contingencies. The defense policy should adequately emphasize the requirements for securing national interests in the Bay of Bengal and in the wider Indian Ocean region. The Daily Star

This analysis from The Daily Star, reflecting mainstream Bangladeshi strategic commentary, accurately identifies the dual priority of Bangladesh's maritime defense: the immediate territorial and EEZ protection requirement and the broader regional deterrence requirement in a contested Indo-Pacific environment. Meeting both requirements simultaneously, with the resource constraints that Bangladesh faces, requires doctrinal clarity and capability prioritization that this section provides.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Bay of Bengal's strategic significance is not merely geographical. It is the nexus of three of the most significant geopolitical competitions currently underway: the US-China competition for influence and military access, the India-China competition for regional primacy, and the competition between China's Maritime Silk Road infrastructure investments and the alternative infrastructure frameworks promoted by the Quad and its partners. Bangladesh, at the center of this nexus, cannot remain a passive observer of these competitions: it must develop the strategic clarity, the military capability, and the diplomatic skill to manage its position in each of them simultaneously.

5.2 The Naval Development Program: Priorities and Requirements

Bangladesh's naval development program, accelerated under Forces Goal 2030, has transformed the Bangladesh Navy from a coastal defense force into an embryonic blue-water capability. The acquisition of Ming-class submarines, Type 053 frigates, and Type 056 corvettes has given the navy a three-dimensional capability, surface, subsurface, and aviation, that it previously lacked entirely. The challenge for the 2026 to 2036 period is to consolidate and extend this capability while addressing its most significant operational weaknesses.

The most significant operational weakness of the Bangladesh Navy is its extremely limited anti-submarine warfare capability. Bangladesh operates Chinese-origin submarines; its surface fleet has very limited ability to detect, track, and engage submarines other than its own. In a regional environment where both India and China operate substantial submarine fleets, and where submarine operations in the Bay of Bengal are a significant gray zone competition tool, this gap is not merely operationally concerning but strategically significant.

Development programs in 2025 focus on the procurement of additional large patrol craft and the construction of indigenous frigates. The Air Force maintains a fleet of F-7BGI and MiG-29 fighters, with modernization efforts in 2026 involving evaluations of the JF-17 Block III, J-10C, and Eurofighter Typhoon to replace aging airframes. Global Military The indigenous frigate construction program deserves particular attention as a capability and industrial development initiative simultaneously. The ability to construct frigates domestically reduces supply chain vulnerability, builds indigenous industrial capability, and creates a foundation for export potential over the longer term. But indigenous frigate construction requires technology, expertise, and industrial capacity that Bangladesh currently lacks, making the technology transfer dimensions of any international partnership for this program among the most critical variables in its success or failure.

The maritime patrol aircraft requirement is among the most pressing of Bangladesh's naval capability gaps. Effective maritime domain awareness across a 118,813 square kilometer EEZ requires fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft capable of extended endurance at range, equipped with modern sensors and communications systems. Bangladesh's current maritime patrol capability is inadequate for the task. The acquisition of maritime patrol aircraft, whether from the United States (P-8 Poseidon being the regional standard, operated by India and Australia), Japan, or European suppliers, should be a high-priority element of the naval development program.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

5.3 The Submarine Program: Operational Effectiveness and Future Development

Bangladesh's two Ming-class submarines, acquired from China in 2016, represent both a significant military capability and a significant operational challenge. The Ming class, while not representing contemporary submarine technology, provides Bangladesh with a credible underwater denial capability that is genuinely deterrent against surface naval operations in the approaches to Bangladesh's ports and EEZ. The political and strategic significance of submarine ownership, establishing Bangladesh as a state with a genuine three-dimensional naval capability, is at least as important as the tactical military value of the specific platforms acquired.

The operational challenge is sustaining these platforms to acceptable readiness levels. Submarine maintenance is among the most technically demanding activities in military operations, requiring specialized facilities, highly trained personnel, and access to manufacturer technical support. Bangladesh's submarine maintenance capability is largely dependent on Chinese technical assistance, which creates precisely the strategic dependency that the diversification agenda seeks to reduce. Developing indigenous submarine maintenance capability, or establishing alternative maintenance partnerships, is a medium-term defense industrial priority.

The question of future submarine acquisition deserves strategic analysis rather than simple procurement momentum. The Ming-class submarines will reach the end of their operational life during the 2026 to 2036 period, and a decision about their replacement will need to be made within the next few years. The choice of replacement platform is a significant strategic decision: continuing with Chinese submarines deepens the existing dependency while potentially upgrading capability; acquiring submarines from an alternative supplier such as Germany, France, South Korea, or Japan represents a significant diversification and interoperability shift, but at substantially greater cost and with the complication of developing new maintenance infrastructure and crew training programs.

The strategic recommendation is to pursue a replacement submarine program from a non-Chinese supplier, with technology transfer provisions that enable Bangladesh to develop domestic maintenance capability over time. The German Type 212A or Type 214 submarines, operated by numerous NATO and partner navies and widely regarded as among the most capable conventional submarines in service, represent the gold standard for non-nuclear submarine capability. The South Korean KSS-III, which incorporates air-independent propulsion and a vertical launch system, is another sophisticated alternative that comes with a Korean willingness to engage in extensive technology transfer that the country's own submarine development experience demonstrates.

CHAPTER SIX: THE AIR FORCE TRANSFORMATION AND THE FIGHTER ACQUISITION DECISIONS

6.1 The Strategic Logic of the Fighter Aircraft Decision

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The decision about which fighter aircraft to acquire to replace Bangladesh's aging F-7BGI and MiG-29 fleet is the single most consequential defense procurement decision facing the BNP government. It is consequential not merely for military operational reasons but for strategic and diplomatic reasons that extend far beyond the purely military calculus.

The Bangladesh Air Force's December 2025 letter of intent with Italy's Leonardo for Eurofighter Typhoons to replace its J-7s and MiG-29s is a good example of diversification. The United States can use third-party transfer approvals, export-credit tools, and Foreign Military Financing to make Western bids like the Typhoon more competitive, especially if they integrate US weapons, sensors, or datalinks into US-Bangladesh training and exercises. War on the Rocks

The strategic logic of the Eurofighter Typhoon acquisition, if it proceeds, is multiple. Operationally, the Typhoon is a fourth-generation-plus combat aircraft with genuine multi-role capabilities, equipped with advanced avionics, a powerful radar, and the ability to carry a wide range of air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions. It would give the Bangladesh Air Force a substantial qualitative improvement over any current platform in its inventory, including the J-10CE currently under procurement from China. Strategically, the Typhoon acquisition would represent the most significant single step toward defense supply diversification that Bangladesh has yet taken, establishing a relationship with European defense industry that creates political leverage and technological access that purely Chinese supply chains do not provide.

The complication is cost. The procurement deal of twelve to sixteen Eurofighter Typhoon airframes along with associated training and logistical support is estimated to cost approximately $2.5 to $3.0 billion. Defencejournalbd This is a very large sum for a defense budget of Bangladesh's scale, and it will require creative financing arrangements, including potentially Italian government concessional financing or European export credit facilities, to be manageable. The J-10CE acquisition at approximately $2.2 billion for twenty airframes, while representing a similar financial commitment, comes with Chinese government financing on terms that Western suppliers will struggle to match commercially.

The analysis must also address the J-10CE acquisition alongside the Typhoon discussion. Modernization efforts in 2026 involve evaluations of the JF-17 Block III, J-10C, and Eurofighter Typhoon to replace aging airframes. Global Military The simultaneous pursuit of Chinese and Western fighter options is strategically coherent as a negotiating posture but operationally problematic if both acquisitions proceed: maintaining two different advanced fighter types from suppliers with incompatible supply chains, training systems, and interoperability architectures creates a logistical and operational complexity that may well outweigh the diversification benefit.

The strategic recommendation is a deliberate choice between the Chinese and Western options rather than an attempt to maintain both simultaneously. If Bangladesh's priority is political and strategic diversification from China, the Typhoon acquisition should proceed and the J-10CE acquisition should be restructured or deferred. If fiscal constraints make the Typhoon unaffordable, the J-10CE represents a genuine capability improvement over the current fleet and should proceed as the primary acquisition while Western procurement is pursued for other capability categories. The attempt to maintain both simultaneously is likely to result in fiscal

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

strain, operational complexity, and a procurement system that fails to deliver either program satisfactorily.

6.2 The Air Defense Architecture: A Comprehensive Assessment

Bangladesh's air defense architecture is in transition. The existing layered system of FM-90 short-range SAMs, Oerlikon Skyguard gun systems, and Ground Master long-range radar systems provides a foundation, but it remains inadequate for the demands of the current strategic environment, particularly given Myanmar's repeated airspace violations and the increasingly capable air forces of regional states.

Current procurement trends show a shift toward Turkish and Pakistani hardware, including the potential acquisition of the SIPER long-range air defense system, which would give Bangladesh its first genuine long-range area air defense capability. Global Military The Turkish SIPER system, developed by ROKETSAN and Aselsan, is Turkey's domestically developed successor to the S-400 that Ankara controversially acquired from Russia, and its development represents precisely the kind of indigenous defense industry success that Bangladesh aspires to replicate. For Bangladesh, the SIPER acquisition would provide a political diversification benefit (Turkish rather than Chinese or Russian origin), a technological benefit (genuinely long-range air defense with modern capabilities), and a defense industry partnership opportunity (Turkey has demonstrated willingness to engage in technology transfer and joint production arrangements).

The air defense architecture requires integration, not merely the addition of individual systems. A coherent integrated air defense system requires a common command and control architecture that allows all air defense elements, from short-range guns through medium-range SAMs to long-range systems, to operate as a coordinated whole under a unified command structure. Bangladesh currently lacks this integrated architecture: its various air defense systems operate largely independently, significantly reducing their collective effectiveness. The creation of a Joint Air Defense Command, with a common operations center, shared radar data, and unified command authority over all air defense assets, is a doctrinal and organizational requirement that is as important as any specific system acquisition.

The electronic dimension of air defense deserves specific attention in light of the April 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict lessons. Air defense systems that depend on radar systems vulnerable to jamming, and command and control networks vulnerable to cyber attack, are much less effective in modern conflict than their technical specifications suggest. The integration of electronic warfare protection into the air defense architecture, including low-probability-of-intercept radar modes, frequency hopping communications, and redundant command and control pathways, is a requirement that all future air defense acquisition programs must address.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ARMY MODERNIZATION AGENDA: FORCE STRUCTURE AND DOCTRINE

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.1 The Army's Evolving Force Structure

The Bangladesh Army's force structure, shaped by Forces Goal 2030 and now being revised in its aftermath, reflects the army's dual mandate: territorial defense against external threats and internal security operations in support of civil authority. The raising of three new divisions, the mechanization of significant portions of the infantry, the introduction of main battle tanks and artillery systems, and the creation of the para-commando brigade have significantly enhanced the army's conventional warfare capability. But the force structure remains optimized for the Cold War model of territorial defense against state adversaries rather than for the hybrid warfare environment that the current strategic assessment identifies as the primary threat.

The most significant structural gap is the absence of a well-developed rapid reaction capability for contingencies along the eastern border with Myanmar. The ongoing Myanmar civil conflict creates a scenario in which Bangladeshi forces might be called upon to respond rapidly to a significant cross-border incursion, armed group activity, or a large-scale forced movement of people across the Naf River. The army formations currently deployed in the southeastern region are not specifically optimized for this rapid response mission, and the logistics infrastructure in Cox's Bazar and its hinterland, while improving, remains inadequate for rapid deployment of significant military force.

The proposed force structure revision for the 2026 to 2036 period should create a dedicated southeastern boundary response formation: a brigade-sized rapid reaction force based in the Cox's Bazar region, specifically equipped, trained, and positioned for rapid response to threats originating from the Myanmar direction. This formation should be equipped with wheeled rather than tracked vehicles for speed of deployment in the coastal terrain, with air assault capability using the Bangladesh Army's helicopter fleet, and with specialized training for operations in the riverine and coastal environment of the Naf River and the adjacent Teknaf area.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts region presents a different but equally important force structure requirement. The CHT remains the site of a complex internal security challenge involving the indigenous hill peoples' political aspirations, the legacy of the unimplemented 1997 Peace Accord, and a persistent low-level armed presence by the Kuki-Chin National Front and other armed groups with cross-border connections to Myanmar. The army units deployed in the CHT require not primarily combat power but the specific capabilities associated with effective counterinsurgency: intelligence, civil affairs, information operations, and the ability to build relationships with the local population that distinguish the army as a protector rather than an occupier.

7.2 The Network-Centric Warfare Transition

The Forces Goal 2030 plan has been revised in 2026 to emphasize rapid response capabilities and network-centric warfare. Global Military This revision reflects a doctrinal shift of fundamental importance: from a platform-centric model, in which military capability is measured primarily by the number and quality of individual weapons systems, to a network-centric model, in which capability is measured by the ability to integrate information from multiple sensors,

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

process it rapidly, and deliver effects through the most appropriate available system faster than the adversary can respond.

The network-centric warfare transition requires investment not primarily in new weapons platforms but in the communications infrastructure, data processing systems, command and control software, and trained personnel that make the network function. Bangladesh's current military communications architecture is inadequate for network-centric warfare: it lacks the secure, redundant, high-bandwidth communications networks that allow the real-time sharing of sensor data across platforms and services. The procurement of a modern military communications architecture, based on software-defined radios, encrypted data links, and satellite communications as a backbone, is a higher-priority investment for network-centric capability than any additional weapons system.

The Army Cyber Group, mentioned in the NDC journal article cited above, represents an important institutional initiative toward the cyber and electronic warfare capabilities that network-centric warfare requires. But the Group remains in early development, with limited personnel, limited equipment, and limited doctrine. The Electronic Warfare Brigade proposed in Chapter Four of this part, and the Cyber Command proposed in the NDC journal, represent the institutional embodiment of the network-centric warfare transition: the organizational structures that give doctrinal concept operational substance.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE ALLIANCE ARCHITECTURE: MANAGING MULTIPLE PARTNERSHIPS

8.1 The Japan Partnership: Depth, Precedent, and Strategic Significance

Bangladesh and Japan signed a formal agreement on 3 February 2026 to facilitate the transfer of defense equipment and technology, establishing a legal framework governing the handling and transfer of military equipment between the two nations. Wikipedia This agreement, described briefly in Part Thirteen, deserves a more extended strategic analysis in this part's context of alliance management.

Japan's defense engagement with Bangladesh is part of a broader strategic shift in Tokyo's foreign and security policy that began with the revision of Japan's National Security Strategy in December 2022 and accelerated under subsequent policy developments. Japan's decision to increase its defense budget to two percent of GDP, to develop counterstrike capabilities, and to expand its defense export framework created the institutional conditions for a qualitatively more significant defense partnership with countries like Bangladesh than had previously been possible under Japan's constitutional constraints.

For Bangladesh, the Japan partnership offers several distinctive advantages that neither China nor the Western partners can fully replicate. First, Japan's geographic and strategic position makes it a partner that shares Bangladesh's interest in a stable Bay of Bengal and open sea lanes

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

without the bilateral complications that characterize the relationships with India and China. Second, Japan's defense technology, particularly in maritime surveillance, electronic warfare, and naval systems, is among the most advanced in the world, and Japan's willingness to transfer technology to trusted partners has grown significantly in the post-2022 strategic environment. Third, Japan's Official Development Assistance framework, through which the Matarbari port project is being financed, creates an economic foundation for the defense relationship that makes the overall partnership more durable than a purely security-based arrangement.

The specific technology transfer commitments that Bangladesh should pursue through the Japan framework include maritime patrol aircraft technology (Japan's P-1 maritime patrol aircraft is among the world's most capable), radar and sensor technology for coastal surveillance, and potentially anti-submarine warfare technology that addresses one of Bangladesh's most critical capability gaps. The February 2026 agreement provides the legal framework; the substantive content of the technology transfer relationship needs to be defined through detailed bilateral negotiations that should be a priority for the BNP government's defense diplomatic agenda.

8.2 The Turkey Partnership: Drones, Air Defense, and Industrial Cooperation

The Turkey-Bangladesh defense relationship, which has grown substantially since the acquisition of TB2 drones and the negotiations over the SIPER air defense system, represents one of the most strategically productive bilateral defense partnerships that Bangladesh has developed in the recent period. Turkey's combination of advanced defense technology, willingness to engage in technology transfer, and non-aligned positioning outside the major power blocs makes it an ideal partner for Bangladesh's diversification agenda.

The TB2 drone acquisition has been operationally significant for Bangladesh in multiple respects: it provided a genuine intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability that Bangladesh previously lacked; it demonstrated that Bangladesh could operate advanced unmanned systems, building confidence for future acquisitions; and it established a training and maintenance relationship with Baykar that provides the foundation for further cooperation. The TB3 development, which significantly extends the TB2's capabilities, and Baykar's development of the Kizilelma combat drone, which provides genuine combat capability from a carrier-based platform, suggest that Turkey's unmanned aviation industry will continue to offer Bangladesh-relevant options over the decade ahead.

The SIPER air defense acquisition, if it proceeds, would represent the most significant Turkish-origin defense system acquisition that Bangladesh has made. The political dimensions of the SIPER decision are not trivial: acquiring a Turkish-developed long-range air defense system rather than a Russian S-300/400 or Chinese HQ-9 would represent a significant statement about Bangladesh's willingness to orient its most sensitive capability acquisitions toward suppliers whose political alignment with democratic values is more reliable. The operational dimensions are equally significant: SIPER's integration with Turkey's broader air defense architecture and its compatibility with NATO-standard systems would give Bangladesh options for interoperability that Chinese-origin systems do not provide.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The industrial cooperation dimension of the Turkey partnership deserves equal attention. Turkey's willingness to establish joint ventures, license production, and transfer manufacturing technology to partner countries, demonstrated in its relationships with Indonesia, Pakistan, and Malaysia, represents exactly the kind of defense industrial partnership that Bangladesh needs for its indigenous production ambitions. Negotiating specific industrial cooperation arrangements within the Turkey partnership, including joint ventures for drone manufacturing, missile component production, and potentially naval construction, should be a priority for Bangladesh's defense industrial development agenda.

8.3 The Pakistan Rapprochement and Its Defense Implications

One of the most strategically significant developments in Bangladesh's bilateral relationships since the July Revolution is the remarkable rapprochement with Pakistan. For the fifty-three years following Bangladesh's liberation war in 1971, in which Pakistani military forces committed atrocities against the Bangladeshi population, the relationship between the two countries was defined by mutual suspicion, unresolved historical grievances, and minimal engagement. The post-July 2024 political environment, in which political forces historically aligned with Pakistan, including BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, have come to prominence, has created the conditions for a remarkable diplomatic opening.

There is a visible thaw in Dhaka-Islamabad relations, with Dhaka-Islamabad direct trade having resumed for the first time since 1971 and travel restrictions easing. Eurasia Review This thaw has defense dimensions as well: Pakistani military attachés have visited Bangladesh, discussions about acquiring JF-17 Block III fighters from Pakistan are reportedly underway, and the intelligence relationship between the two countries' establishments, frozen for over five decades, has begun to cautiously reopen.

The defense policy implications of the Pakistan rapprochement require careful analysis. On the positive side, Pakistan's defense industrial capacity, particularly its partnership with China in the JF-17 program, its experience with operating a wide range of weapons systems in challenging operational environments, and its potential as a training partner for specific military specialties, represents genuine value for Bangladesh's defense modernization. The JF-17 Block III, if acquired, would provide a capable combat aircraft at a relatively affordable price point, with a supply chain that, while ultimately dependent on Chinese components, is managed through Pakistan rather than directly through Beijing.

On the negative side, the Pakistan rapprochement carries significant diplomatic complications, particularly with India. In January 2025, a delegation from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence visited Bangladesh, which was a rare instance of high-level contacts between the two countries' intelligence establishments. The growing rapprochement between the Bangladeshi administration and Pakistan is a potential source of instability for India, given that parties historically aligned with Islamabad have gained power in Dhaka. The Diplomat The Pakistan-ISI visit, and the broader intelligence relationship opening, is precisely the kind of development that triggers the deepest Indian strategic anxieties about Bangladesh, connecting as it does to India's longstanding concerns about Pakistan-sponsored insurgent activities in India's northeastern states.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The strategic recommendation for the Pakistan relationship is to pursue it in the defense domain with deliberate restraint and transparency. The JF-17 acquisition can proceed as part of the diversification agenda, but should be accompanied by explicit assurances to India that the Pakistan relationship does not extend to intelligence activities directed at India's security interests. The ISI engagement should be managed through the formal bilateral intelligence framework proposed in Part Thirteen, with parliamentary oversight and a clear mandate limited to terrorism and extremism issues rather than encompassing the broader geopolitical competition with India that Pakistan's intelligence services sometimes seek to recruit Bangladesh into.

8.4 The United Kingdom and European Engagement

The Eurofighter Typhoon Letter of Intent with Italy's Leonardo has opened a new dimension of Bangladesh's defense relationship with European states that deserves attention as a component of its broader alliance architecture. The United Kingdom, which was the leading edge of the Eurofighter program and which retains significant defense industrial and strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific, has a complementary role to play in Bangladesh's defense development that the Typhoon relationship provides an entry point for.

The UK's AUKUS arrangement with Australia and the United States, its deployment of carrier strike groups to the Indo-Pacific, and its defense industrial presence in the region all make it a more significant Indo-Pacific actor than its post-Brexit global role might suggest. For Bangladesh, a defense relationship with the UK that combines the Typhoon acquisition, potential naval platform cooperation (the UK's BAE Systems has significant naval design expertise), and training and military education partnerships would provide a European anchor for the diversification agenda that complements the Italian, Turkish, and Japanese relationships.

The European dimension of Bangladesh's alliance architecture also includes France, Germany, and Sweden, all of whom have defense industrial interests in the region and defense cooperation frameworks with developing country partners. France's naval design expertise is world-class; Germany's submarine technology is among the best available and comes with the technology transfer willingness that the SSK replacement program requires; Sweden's Saab defense group produces electronic warfare systems of the highest quality that would be directly relevant to the Electronic Warfare Brigade program. Building these relationships systematically, through defense attache engagement, military education partnerships, and specific procurement discussions, would strengthen Bangladesh's European defense dimension at a moment when European states are themselves increasing their Indo-Pacific engagement.

CHAPTER NINE: THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS: INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE UNFINISHED PEACE

9.1 The Unimplemented Accord and Its Security Consequences

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord of 1997, signed between the Bangladesh government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) under the leadership of Santu Larma, was intended to end the twenty-year insurgency that had cost thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people. Nearly thirty years later, its implementation remains deeply incomplete, and the CHT remains a region of unresolved tension, armed presence by multiple groups, and periodic violence.

The security situation in the CHT is deeply connected to the broader Myanmar crisis. The Kuki-Chin communities that straddle the Bangladesh-Myanmar border have kinship, political, and sometimes organizational connections across the frontier, and the Myanmar civil conflict has created conditions in which arms, fighters, and refugees move across the border in ways that complicate Bangladesh's security management of the CHT region. The Arakan Army's consolidation of control over Rakhine State has created a new armed power on Bangladesh's southeastern frontier that has its own relationships, sometimes collaborative and sometimes competitive, with CHT-based groups.

From a defense policy perspective, the CHT presents the classic challenge of distinguishing between security operations and political negotiations as instruments of conflict resolution. The purely security approach, which has dominated Bangladeshi policy for most of the post-1997 period, has failed to produce stability: the PCJSS retains armed capability, newer armed groups have emerged to challenge both the accord's signatories and the government's authority, and periodic violence continues to affect the indigenous communities and Bangladeshi security forces alike.

The defense policy recommendation for the CHT is a deliberate shift toward a political-security integrated approach: genuine implementation of the 1997 Accord's political provisions, including land restitution and autonomous governance arrangements, combined with a security posture that distinguishes firmly between the legitimate use of force against genuinely armed groups engaged in violence and the illegitimate use of security operations to suppress the legitimate political activities of the indigenous communities.

CHAPTER TEN: THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: PROCESS, POLITICS, AND PRECEDENT

10.1 Why Bangladesh Has Never Published a White Paper and Why It Must Now

The publication of a National Defense Policy White Paper is, as Part Thirteen argued at length, a legal obligation that should be constitutionally and statutorily mandated. But before that legal obligation is enacted, there is a more immediate political case for the BNP government to publish a white paper voluntarily: it is the most effective single instrument available for demonstrating to domestic and international audiences that Bangladesh's defense policy is principled, coherent, and democratically accountable.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's defense modernization program has attracted significant international attention, sometimes concerned, sometimes admiring, but almost always underinformed. The absence of any official document explaining the strategic rationale for Bangladesh's defense choices, the threat assessments that drive capability priorities, the alliance management principles that govern partner relationships, and the resource allocation methodology that determines budget distributions creates an information vacuum that is filled by speculation, misrepresentation, and strategic miscommunication. A credible, analytically rigorous defense white paper would address this vacuum and establish Bangladesh as a state whose defense policy is conducted with the transparency and intellectual seriousness that its aspirations as a regional middle power demand.

The domestic case for a white paper is equally compelling. Bangladesh's defense budget is funded by taxpayers, and those taxpayers have a legitimate right to understand why their money is being spent on submarines rather than schools, on fighter aircraft rather than hospitals, on missile systems rather than flood control. A defense white paper that honestly articulates the threat environment, explains the capability choices that the government has made in response to that threat environment, and presents the financial trade-offs in comprehensible terms would establish a democratic accountability for defense spending that Bangladesh has never had.

10.2 The Model Bangladesh Defense White Paper: Structure and Content

The following represents the structure and key content of the Model Bangladesh Defense White Paper, incorporating the analysis developed across all fourteen parts of this textbook. This model is not a substitute for the politically negotiated document that the actual white paper process must produce; it is a demonstration of what a comprehensive, credible white paper should contain, and a benchmark against which the actual product can be evaluated.

The Model White Paper is structured in seven parts, corresponding to the content requirements specified in Part Thirteen of this textbook.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT: BANGLADESH AND ITS SECURITY ENVIRONMENT, 2026 TO 2036

Bangladesh exists in one of the most complex and consequential strategic environments in the Indo-Pacific. Its geographic position at the apex of the Bay of Bengal, sharing land borders with India and Myanmar and a maritime boundary with both, gives it strategic significance that far exceeds what its economic power or military capability would suggest. The primary threats to Bangladesh's security are not, at this moment, conventional military invasion from a neighboring state, though this possibility cannot be entirely discounted over a decade's horizon. They are a more complex array of threats that combine conventional, unconventional, gray zone, and human security dimensions.

The threat from Myanmar's civil conflict is the most immediate and operationally pressing. The Arakan Army's control of Rakhine State has created an armed force on Bangladesh's southeastern border that has demonstrated both the capability and the willingness to project

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

violence across the Naf River. Cross-border arms flows, incursions by parties to the Myanmar conflict into Bangladeshi territory, and the continued presence of more than one million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar all create security challenges that Bangladesh must address with a combination of diplomatic engagement, military deterrence, and humanitarian management.

The gray zone competition in the Bay of Bengal, driven primarily by China's maritime expansion strategy and the US-China competition for regional influence, creates a more diffuse but strategically significant threat to Bangladesh's ability to maintain strategic autonomy. China's submarine sales, infrastructure investments, and training presence in Bangladesh create dependencies that limit Bangladesh's freedom of action in ways that are not always immediately visible. The US pressure for foundational defense agreements creates similar, if less acute, alignment demands that Bangladesh must manage with diplomatic skill.

The India relationship, while structurally one of deep interdependence that neither party can afford to weaponize permanently, contains persistent sources of tension, including border killings, water resource disputes, trade asymmetries, and political interference concerns, that require sustained management. The possibility that a future Indian government might adopt a more assertive approach to Bangladesh's growing defense capability, including its Chinese-origin platforms and its Pakistan rapprochement, creates a scenario of potential deterioration that defense planning must address.

Internal security threats, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts situation, extremist radicalization in specific communities, and the persistent challenge of organized crime and trafficking along the Myanmar border, complete the threat picture. These threats do not require a conventional military response, but they do require a security sector with the institutional capacity, legal framework, and community engagement capability to address them effectively within the rule of law.

POLICY FRAMEWORK: THE PRINCIPLES OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE POLICY

Bangladesh's defense policy is grounded in the constitutional principles of sovereignty, democracy, and international law, and guided by the foreign policy doctrine of friendship to all and malice toward none that has served as Bangladesh's strategic foundation since independence. It embodies the following specific principles.

First, strategic autonomy: Bangladesh will not subordinate its defense decisions to the strategic interests of any major power, whether China, the United States, India, or any other state. It will manage all bilateral and multilateral defense relationships in ways that preserve its freedom of action and protect its sovereign interests.

Second, non-aggressive deterrence: Bangladesh's defense capability is oriented toward deterrence of aggression, not toward offensive operations against any neighboring or regional state. Its military modernization is designed to raise the cost of any potential aggression to a level

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

that makes such aggression irrational for any potential adversary, not to threaten any state's legitimate security interests.

Third, rules-based engagement: Bangladesh's defense activities will be conducted in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and the law of the sea. It will resolve disputes through peaceful means wherever possible, and will use military force only as a last resort and in accordance with its international legal obligations.

Fourth, democratic accountability: Bangladesh's defense policy will be developed through transparent, consultative processes that include parliamentary oversight, civil society engagement, and public accountability for defense expenditure.

Fifth, comprehensive security: Bangladesh will address threats to its security across all dimensions, including military, economic, human, and informational, through a whole-of-government approach coordinated through the National Security Council.

FORCE STRUCTURE: THE ARCHITECTURE OF BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY

Bangladesh's armed forces, comprising approximately 160,000 active personnel in the army, navy, and air force, are organized to provide the following core capabilities.

The Bangladesh Army provides the primary territorial defense capability, with ten infantry divisions, a para-commando brigade, three mechanized infantry units, an armored corps, artillery forces, and emerging air defense and electronic warfare capabilities. The Army is in transition toward a network-centric force structure, with the Forces Goal 2030 revisions emphasizing rapid response capabilities, electronic warfare integration, and a dedicated southeastern boundary response formation oriented toward the Myanmar contingency.

The Bangladesh Navy provides the maritime defense capability, including two Ming-class diesel-electric submarines, two Type 053H frigates, four Type 056 corvettes, multiple patrol vessels, and naval aviation assets. The Navy is developing anti-submarine warfare capability, maritime patrol aircraft capacity, and indigenous frigate construction capability as its priorities for the 2026 to 2036 period.

The Bangladesh Air Force provides the air superiority and ground attack capability, currently equipped with F-7BGI fighters, MiG-29 fighters (limited operational status), Yak-130 advanced trainers, and TB2 drones. The Air Force is transitioning to a next-generation fighter force, with the J-10CE acquisition and the Eurofighter Typhoon evaluation representing the principal procurement activities of the current period. The Air Defense architecture, integrating FM-90 SAMs, Ground Master radars, and the pending SIPER long-range system, will provide integrated area air defense for the first time.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT: PRIORITIES FOR 2026 TO 2036

The priority capability developments for the white paper period are the following.

Electronic warfare: The establishment of a Joint Electronic Warfare Brigade as a tri-service capability, with electronic intelligence, jamming, electronic protection, and spectrum management functions, represents the highest-priority near-term capability investment. The lessons of the April to May 2025 Indo-Pakistan conflict confirm that this capability is the most immediately relevant asymmetric investment available to Bangladesh.

Integrated air defense: The completion of the air defense architecture through the SIPER acquisition, the development of a Joint Air Defense Command, and the integration of all air defense assets under a common command and control framework, to be achieved by 2029.

Maritime domain awareness: The acquisition of maritime patrol aircraft, the expansion of coastal radar coverage, and the development of maritime drone capability for extended-range EEZ surveillance, to be achieved by 2030.

Network-centric warfare infrastructure: The procurement of a modern military communications architecture, including software-defined radios, encrypted data links, and satellite communications, that enables the real-time sharing of sensor data across platforms and services, to be achieved by 2028.

Indigenous defense production: The establishment of the Defense Economic Zone and the development of indigenous frigate construction capability, with a target of constructing the first domestically built frigate by 2032.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION: THE DEFENSE BUDGET FRAMEWORK

The defense budget for the 2026 to 2027 fiscal year is approximately 40,698 crore taka, representing approximately 1.4 percent of GDP. This level of spending is inadequate for the capability development priorities identified in this white paper, particularly the electronic warfare, maritime patrol, and air defense investments. Over the five-year period to 2031, the government commits to progressively increasing the defense capital budget to achieve a ratio of at least forty percent capital to sixty percent operational expenditure, compared to the current ratio of approximately three percent capital to ninety-seven percent operational.

The financing of major procurement programs will rely on a combination of government-to-government concessional financing, commercial financing with government guarantee, and domestic borrowing within fiscal prudence constraints. All financing arrangements for defense procurement will be disclosed to the parliamentary defense committee as required by the proposed Defense Procurement Act.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT: PARTNERS, FRAMEWORKS, AND COMMITMENTS

Bangladesh's principal bilateral defense partnerships are with China (primary equipment supplier), Turkey (drones and air defense), Japan (technology transfer and maritime surveillance), Italy/European consortium (advanced fighter), the United States (training, interoperability, and exercises), and Pakistan (emerging JF-17 aircraft platform). The management of these partnerships follows the strategic autonomy principle: no single partner relationship will be allowed to create dependency that limits Bangladesh's freedom of strategic choice.

Bangladesh's multilateral defense commitments include its contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, its participation in BIMSTEC security frameworks, its engagement with the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and its adherence to all applicable arms control and non-proliferation agreements.

Bangladesh will not enter into any collective defense arrangement that commits it to participate in military operations on behalf of another state, and will not allow its territory to be used as a base for military operations directed at any neighboring state.

REVIEW AND ACCOUNTABILITY: MECHANISMS FOR ONGOING ASSESSMENT

The implementation of this white paper will be monitored through the following mechanisms. The parliamentary defense committee will receive quarterly briefings from the National Security Council Secretariat on white paper implementation progress. An annual defense policy review, to be published as a public document, will assess progress against the capability development priorities and resource allocation commitments. The parliamentary Comptroller and Auditor General will conduct an annual audit of defense expenditure with specific reference to white paper commitments. A five-year comprehensive review will be conducted by 2031, updating the strategic assessment, revising capability priorities as necessary, and preparing the foundation for the next white paper.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GEOPOLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE SMALL STATE IN A CONTESTED WORLD

11.1 The Philosophical Foundation of Strategic Autonomy

Part Fourteen, in its extended analysis of Bangladesh's strategic environment and defense development priorities, has consistently returned to a single foundational concept: strategic autonomy. This concept, now central to Bangladesh's official foreign policy articulation, deserves philosophical examination beyond its policy application.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Strategic autonomy, as a concept in political philosophy, reflects a synthesis of realist and liberal international relations theory. From realism, it takes the insight that the international system is anarchic, that states must ultimately rely on their own capabilities rather than on the reliability of alliances or international institutions, and that the pursuit of security requires a clear-eyed assessment of power and threat. From liberalism, it takes the insight that interdependence creates mutual interests in cooperation, that international institutions and norms matter even for states that cannot enforce them unilaterally, and that a state's internal governance quality is a determinant of its external security.

The philosophical case for Bangladesh's strategic autonomy is grounded in the post-colonial tradition that emerged from the Bandung Conference of 1955, when newly independent states from Asia and Africa proclaimed their refusal to be conscripted into either superpower bloc in the Cold War. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's foundational foreign policy principle of friendship with all and malice toward none was not merely a diplomatic posture but a philosophical statement about the kind of international order that newly independent states sought to create: one in which sovereign equality, rather than great power hierarchy, was the organizing principle.

In the contemporary Indo-Pacific context, strategic autonomy faces its most severe test since the Cold War. The US-China competition is more intense, more all-encompassing, and more demanding of alignment than the US-Soviet competition was for most Asian states in the Cold War period. The pressure to choose sides is more persistent and the costs of refusal more immediately visible. As geopolitical competition intensifies and a transactional approach in international relations becomes the new norm, it is wise to prepare for any restrictive measures imposed by major powers. The Daily Star

The philosophical response to this pressure draws on what Hedley Bull called the pluralist tradition in international society: the argument that a world order composed of genuinely sovereign states, each pursuing its own interests and values within a framework of international law, is preferable to one dominated by a hegemon, however benevolent. Bangladesh's insistence on strategic autonomy is not merely a calculation of narrow self-interest; it is a commitment to a vision of international order in which states of Bangladesh's size and power have genuine agency rather than being merely objects of great power competition.

11.2 The Geopolitics of Vulnerability: Bangladesh's Structural Position

Bangladesh occupies what geographers and political scientists call a position of structural vulnerability: a state whose geographic position, economic dependencies, and political characteristics make it a persistent object of external competition and pressure. Understanding this vulnerability in its full dimensions is the necessary precondition for designing a defense policy that addresses it effectively.

The geographic vulnerability is fundamental. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, faces a complex and increasingly volatile situation on its eastern border with Myanmar, and has a southern maritime exposure to the Bay of Bengal that is strategically significant but physically exposed. It lacks strategic depth: the country is so small geographically that a determined

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

conventional military operation by India could reach any part of Bangladesh within days without encountering significant natural obstacles.

The economic vulnerability is equally fundamental. Bangladesh's economy depends on garment exports to a few Western markets, remittances from the Gulf states, and development financing that is increasingly provided by China. Any one of these dependencies can be weaponized by a state with sufficient power and motivation to do so. The Adani power dispute, in which an Indian firm's commercial decision to reduce power supply had immediate economic consequences for Bangladeshi consumers, illustrates how economic interdependence creates security vulnerabilities that military power cannot address.

The political vulnerability is a function of Bangladesh's democratic fragility. A political system with weak institutions, high polarization, and a history of military intervention is vulnerable to the kind of political interference, information operations, and elite capture that sophisticated external actors routinely deploy as gray zone tools. The governance reforms described in Part Thirteen are not merely domestically motivated; they are national security investments that reduce Bangladesh's political vulnerability to external manipulation.

Against this analysis of structural vulnerability, Bangladesh's defense policy must do two things simultaneously: build sufficient military capability to deter the most plausible conventional threats, and address the non-military dimensions of vulnerability through governance reform, economic diversification, information resilience, and diplomatic skill. No amount of military spending can compensate for structural political and economic vulnerabilities that military force cannot address; but no amount of diplomatic skill can compensate for the absence of credible military capability. The two dimensions of security are complementary, not alternative.

CHAPTER TWELVE: TOWARD THE 2036 HORIZON: STRATEGIC VISION AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPIRATION

12.1 What Bangladesh Can Become: A Strategic Vision for 2036

The analysis developed across fourteen parts of this textbook supports a specific strategic vision for Bangladesh in 2036: a state that has achieved genuine democratic defense governance, that possesses credible deterrent capability against the most plausible threats, that maintains productive relationships with all major powers without dependency on any, that contributes constructively to regional security through both multilateral engagement and bilateral cooperation, and that commands the respect of the international community as a state that takes its security responsibilities seriously and manages them with strategic sophistication and democratic accountability.

This vision is achievable. It is not guaranteed. It requires sustained political will, institutional capacity building, resource investment, and diplomatic skill across a decade of effort that will

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

inevitably face setbacks, controversies, and temptations to cut corners in ways that sacrifice long-term institutional strength for short-term political convenience. But the analysis of comparative cases, from South Korea's military transformation to Finland's total defense model to Vietnam's strategic autonomy achievement, demonstrates that states in far more challenging circumstances than Bangladesh have achieved transformations of comparable ambition within comparable timeframes.

The specific markers of success at the 2036 horizon include the following. A National Defense Policy White Paper published in 2026 or 2027, followed by a second white paper in 2031 or 2032, demonstrating that the white paper process has become institutionalized. A parliamentary defense committee that has successfully investigated at least one major procurement controversy and whose findings have led to demonstrable accountability. An intelligence oversight commissioner whose annual reports provide genuine public accountability for the intelligence agencies' activities. A defense procurement system that has conducted at least two major competitive international tenders in full compliance with the proposed Defense Procurement Act's requirements. An Electronic Warfare Brigade at full operational readiness by 2030. A domestically constructed frigate inducted into the Bangladesh Navy by 2033.

These specific markers are deliberately concrete. They are not aspirations but benchmarks: measurable, achievable, and meaningful tests of whether the institutional transformation that this textbook has argued is necessary has actually occurred.

12.2 The Enduring Questions

Part Fourteen concludes with an acknowledgment of the enduring questions that no defense policy document can resolve: questions about the ultimate relationship between force and justice, between national interest and international order, between security and liberty. These questions, examined at length in the philosophical chapters of Part One and returned to throughout the textbook, do not admit of final answers. They are the permanent companions of serious thinking about defense, and they demand not resolution but sustained engagement.

Bangladesh's defense policy community, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and democratic legislature must engage with these questions continuously and seriously, bringing to bear the full range of philosophical, legal, historical, and strategic analysis that this textbook has tried to model. The quality of that engagement will determine, as much as any specific capability acquisition or legislative reform, whether Bangladesh achieves the kind of security that its people deserve.

CONCLUSION TO PART FOURTEEN: THE STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE OF A SOVEREIGN DEFENSE

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The analysis developed across twelve chapters of Part Fourteen arrives at a strategic vision that is simultaneously realistic about Bangladesh's constraints and ambitious about its possibilities. Bangladesh is not a great power and will not become one within the horizon of this analysis. It cannot spend its way to security through defense procurement alone, and it cannot talk its way to security through diplomacy without credible military capability. What it can do, and what Part Fourteen has argued it must do, is develop the specific combination of capabilities, doctrines, alliances, and institutions that make it a credible, autonomous, and strategically coherent actor in the Indo-Pacific security environment.

The BNP government that took office in February 2026 inherits an extraordinary combination of challenges and opportunities. The challenges are real: a deteriorated relationship with India in early repair, a defense budget inadequate for the modernization program's ambitions, a legacy of institutional weakness in democratic defense governance, and a strategic environment more complex and more demanding of sophisticated management than any previous Bangladeshi government has faced. The opportunities are equally real: a constitutional moment that makes institutional reform possible, a diplomatic diversification program that has established productive relationships with Japan, Turkey, Italy, and others, a defense industrial development trajectory that has genuine long-term potential, and a regional positioning in the Bay of Bengal that makes Bangladesh strategically desirable to every major power.

The Model Defense White Paper presented in this part provides the policy framework within which these opportunities can be seized and these challenges addressed. It is not the final word but the beginning of the conversation that Bangladesh's democratic defense community must sustain across the decade ahead and beyond.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FOURTEEN

Bangladesh's Strategic Environment, 2024 to 2026

War on the Rocks. The Bay of Bengal Flank: India's Three-Front Dilemma and Its Implications for Taiwan. March 2026.

The Diplomat. India's Opposition to Bangladesh's Defense Modernization Is a Self-Defeating Strategy. July 2025.

The Financial Express Bangladesh. Between Giants: Bangladesh's Strategy in the Indo-Pacific. March 2026.

The Daily Star. Mapping Bangladesh's Defence Future. April 2026.

The Diplomat. Dhaka Must Tread Cautiously on Routine Defense Agreements with the US. March 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh-India Relations

International Crisis Group. After the Golden Era: Getting Bangladesh-India Ties Back on Track. December 2025.

The Diplomat. Bangladesh-India Relations Are Back on the Brink. December 2025.

The Diplomat. Is the Ice Finally Breaking in Bangladesh-India Relations? March 2026.

Eurasia Review. The Great Divide: Why Bangladesh-India Relations Are at a Historic Breaking Point. January 2026.

Khabarhub. Interdependence Under Stress: The Future of Bangladesh-India Relations. December 2025.

Eurasia Review. India-Bangladesh Standoff Likely to End. December 2025.

The Business Standard. Crisis Group Urges Indian and Bangladeshi Political Parties to Exercise Restraint. December 2025.

Gray Zone Warfare and Hybrid Doctrine

World Class Blogs. Hybrid Threats Explained: The 2025 Guide to Gray Zone Warfare and Modern Conflict. January 2026.

Observer Research Foundation. Pakistan and China's Collusive Grey-Zone Warfare. August 2025.

Center for International Maritime Security. The Bay of Bengal Gray Zone: US Navy Roles in Integrated Campaigning. November 2023.

NDC E-Journal. Conceptualising Information Warfare. June 2025.

Bangladesh Defense Modernization

Bangladesh Military Forces. BNP's Defence Imperative. February 2026.

Bangladesh Military Forces. Establishing an Electronic Warfare Brigade in the Bangladesh Army. May 2025.

Global Military. Bangladesh Military Forces and Defense Capabilities. 2026.

Dhaka Tribune. US National Security Strategy 2025: Implications for Bangladesh and the Indo-Pacific. December 2025.

Wikipedia. Bangladesh and the Indo-Pacific Strategy. Updated September 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Modern Diplomacy. Fear and Loathing in Rakhine: The Challenge of Greater Bangladesh. June 2025.

Indo-Pacific Strategic Theory

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. The Influence of Sea Power Upon History. Boston: Little Brown, 1890.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Mearsheimer, John. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. New York: Norton, 2001.

Ikenberry, G. John. A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.

Hybrid Warfare and Gray Zone Competition

Mazarr, Michael. Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict. Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College Press, 2015.

Hoffman, Frank. Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007.

Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui. Unrestricted Warfare. Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999.

Gerasimov, Valery. The Value of Science Is in the Foresight. Military-Industrial Courier, February 2013.

Lin, Bonny and others. Competition in the Gray Zone: Countering China's Coercion against US Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2022.

End of Part Fourteen

Part Fifteen will address the pedagogy and curriculum architecture for defense studies in Bangladesh: how to build the academic and professional education system that democratic defense governance requires, from undergraduate security studies programs through professional military education to civilian defense expertise development in government, civil society, and the private sector. It will also examine the specific educational reforms required to produce the civilian defense expertise that the legislative and institutional reforms proposed in Parts Thirteen and Fourteen depend upon for their effective implementation, drawing on the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

comparative experience of South Korea's defense studies academy, Finland's national defense university, Australia's Australian Defence College, and India's Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

Part Sixteen will provide the philosophical synthesis of the entire sixteen-part textbook: a comprehensive statement of the principles, values, and strategic vision that should animate Bangladesh's defense policy in the twenty-first century, and a final integrated assessment of the distance between Bangladesh's current reality and the democratic defense governance that its constitution promises and its people deserve, together with the specific benchmarks against which progress toward that vision should be measured over the decade from 2026 to 2036.

PART FIFTEEN: THE PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE OF DEFENSE STUDIES IN BANGLADESH: BUILDING THE INTELLECTUAL AND PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

First Edition, 2026

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

FOREWORD TO PART FIFTEEN

There is a paradox at the heart of every comprehensive defense policy reform agenda: the quality of the reforms depends ultimately on the quality of the people who design them, implement them, teach about them, scrutinize them, and hold them accountable. Laws are only as strong as the institutions that enforce them. Institutions are only as strong as the people who staff them. And the people who staff them are only as capable as the educational and professional development systems that formed them. This simple chain of dependency, from policy vision to institutional design to human capital to educational architecture, is the foundational logic of Part Fifteen.

The thirteen parts that preceded this one constructed a comprehensive vision for Bangladesh's democratic defense governance: from philosophical foundations through constitutional architecture, from legislative reform through operational doctrine, from intelligence oversight through procurement integrity, from peacekeeping governance through strategic vision. Part Fourteen synthesized this vision in a Model Defense White Paper representing the operational

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

culmination of the entire intellectual project. But that vision cannot be implemented, sustained, or improved by people who have not been trained to understand it, who lack the analytical tools to engage with its complexities, who have not been exposed to the comparative experience that informs its specific recommendations, or who work in institutional contexts that do not support serious, independent, critical thinking about defense.

The education question is therefore not a secondary or supplementary dimension of defense policy reform. It is foundational. Every other reform depends on it. The National Security Council requires officials who understand strategic theory, intelligence analysis, and interagency coordination well enough to make the NSC an engine of genuine strategic deliberation rather than a rubber stamp for executive decisions. The parliamentary defense committee requires members with sufficient expertise in defense matters to ask the penetrating questions that genuine oversight demands, and it requires professional staff who can analyze complex procurement programs, assess threat assessments, and evaluate capability development priorities. The Defense Acquisition Authority requires civilian procurement specialists who understand defense technology, international arms markets, and the comparative economics of defense procurement well enough to conduct genuine competitive evaluation. The intelligence oversight commissioner requires legal scholars with deep knowledge of intelligence law, human rights obligations, and the operational realities of intelligence collection. The military justice reform system requires lawyers who understand the intersection of international humanitarian law, human rights law, and military operational necessity.

None of these people exist in Bangladesh in adequate numbers today. This is not a criticism of individual Bangladeshis, who are among the most intellectually capable people in Asia. It is a structural observation about the institutional and educational ecosystem: the universities do not offer the relevant programs, the professional development systems do not build the relevant skills, the research institutions do not generate the relevant knowledge, and the government does not systematically cultivate the civilian defense expertise that democratic defense governance requires. Part Fifteen addresses this structural challenge in the depth and seriousness that it deserves.

The analysis proceeds through sixteen chapters that together construct a comprehensive curriculum and institutional architecture for defense studies in Bangladesh. It examines the theory of professional military and civilian defense education, the historical development of defense studies as an academic discipline globally and in South Asia, the specific deficiencies in Bangladesh's current educational landscape, the comparative models from states that have successfully built defense education infrastructure, the curriculum requirements for different categories of defense professional, the research agenda that Bangladesh's strategic studies community must pursue, the institutional design for a national defense university and associated research institutions, and the long-term vision for a defense studies ecosystem capable of sustaining the democratic defense governance that Bangladesh's constitution requires and its people deserve.

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEORY OF PROFESSIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.1 Why Education Is a Defense Investment, Not a Luxury

The framing of defense education as a luxury, as something desirable but not essential, as a budget item that can be deferred when resources are constrained, is among the most persistent and most damaging misconceptions in the governance of security sectors across the developing world. Part Fifteen begins by confronting this misconception directly, establishing the theoretical case for treating defense education as among the highest-return investments available to any state serious about its long-term security.

The theoretical foundation for this case draws on human capital theory, which emerged from the work of Gary Becker, Theodore Schultz, and Jacob Mincer in the 1950s and 1960s and which established that investment in the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of individuals generates returns comparable to or exceeding those of physical capital investment. Applied to the security sector, human capital theory predicts that investment in the education and professional development of military officers, civilian defense officials, intelligence analysts, and parliamentary oversight staff generates returns in the form of better strategic decisions, more effective military operations, more accountable procurement processes, and more effective diplomatic engagement that far exceed the direct financial cost of the educational investment.

The empirical support for this prediction is substantial. The comparisons between military establishments with robust professional military education systems and those without such systems consistently reveal significant differences in strategic judgment, operational effectiveness, and institutional accountability. The United States military's transformation from the post-Vietnam crisis of institutional confidence to the most professionally educated armed force in history was driven in significant measure by the deliberate investment in professional military education through the system of war colleges, command and staff colleges, and civilian advanced education programs that the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 codified and incentivized. The German Bundeswehr's success in building a military culture genuinely committed to democratic values, the Innere Fuhrung concept analyzed in Part Three of this textbook, was inseparable from the systematic professional education that embedded these values in the military's institutional culture.

For Bangladesh, the human capital argument for defense education investment is particularly compelling because the alternative to educated defense professionals is not uneducated defense professionals but defense professionals educated by default in whatever institutional cultures and operational experiences happen to form them. The Bangladesh Armed Forces' current institutional culture, with its persistent tendencies toward political engagement, procurement opacity, and resistance to civilian oversight, is not an accident of human nature: it is the product of decades of professional socialization in an institutional environment that rewarded these behaviors. Changing the institutional culture requires changing the educational and professional development systems that produce and reproduce it.

The philosophical dimension of this argument draws on Aristotle's concept of habituation, the process by which character is formed through repeated practice of virtuous actions until those actions become natural dispositions rather than deliberate choices. Applied to professional military and civilian defense education, Aristotelian habituation suggests that the goal of defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

education is not merely to convey information about strategic theory or procurement regulations but to form the habits of mind, the analytical dispositions, the ethical commitments, and the professional values that democratic defense governance requires. Information can be conveyed in a briefing; habits require sustained educational engagement.

1.2 The Three Functions of Defense Education

Defense education serves three distinct and partially overlapping functions that must be distinguished analytically, even though in practice they are often delivered through the same institutions and sometimes through the same programs.

The first function is professional competence development: the transmission of the knowledge, skills, and practical judgment required to perform specific defense-related professional roles effectively. This function encompasses operational military training at all levels from tactical skills through joint operations to strategic command, the technical skills required for defense procurement management, the legal expertise required for military justice and intelligence law, and the analytical capabilities required for intelligence assessment and strategic planning.

The second function is democratic value formation: the development of the commitments, dispositions, and habits of thought that democratic defense governance requires. This is the function that Aristotle's habituation concept describes most directly. It encompasses the military officer's internalization of civilian supremacy as a professional value rather than an external constraint, the defense procurement official's commitment to transparency and accountability as intrinsically important rather than merely procedurally required, the parliamentary oversight staffer's understanding of why scrutiny of defense expenditure serves national security rather than undermining it, and the intelligence analyst's commitment to honest assessment rather than telling superiors what they want to hear.

The third function is knowledge generation: the production of the research, analysis, and intellectual capital that informed defense policy requires. Good policy does not emerge from good instincts alone; it requires detailed knowledge of Bangladesh's specific strategic environment, of the comparative experience of other states, of the legal frameworks that constrain and enable policy choices, and of the operational realities that determine what capabilities are achievable. This knowledge is not available off the shelf from foreign sources; it must be generated by Bangladesh's own strategic studies community, working on Bangladesh's specific problems with the intellectual tools appropriate to them.

These three functions require different institutional architectures, different pedagogical approaches, and different resource commitments. Professional competence development is best delivered through a combination of operational experience and formal instruction in professional military education institutions. Democratic value formation is best achieved through long-term educational programs that combine intellectual engagement with peer discussion, mentoring by exemplary senior professionals, and immersion in institutional cultures that model the values being taught. Knowledge generation requires research universities, independent think tanks, and policy research institutions with the academic freedom, the research funding, and the professional incentive structures that serious scholarship requires.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh currently has institutional infrastructure primarily for the first function, the professional military education system centered on the Defence Services Command and Staff College, the National Defence College, and the service academies, and very limited infrastructure for the second and third functions. This imbalance produces a defense professional community with some operational competence but insufficient commitment to democratic values and severely inadequate engagement with the strategic knowledge generation that serious policy analysis requires.

1.3 The Clausewitzian Imperative: War as a Political Act Requires Political Education

Clausewitz's foundational insight, that war is the continuation of politics by other means and that the political purpose of any military enterprise must guide every aspect of its conduct, has profound implications for defense education that are rarely drawn explicitly. If war is inherently a political phenomenon, as Clausewitz insists, then the education of military officers must be fundamentally a political education: an education in the nature of political communities, the dynamics of international politics, the relationship between military means and political ends, and the constitutional and legal constraints that democratic states place on the use of force.

A purely technical military education, one focused on tactics, logistics, weapons systems, and operational planning without sustained engagement with political theory, constitutional law, international relations theory, and the philosophical foundations of the legitimate use of force, is dangerously incomplete from a Clausewitzian perspective. An officer who understands how to plan and execute a combined arms offensive operation but does not understand the political context within which that operation will be conducted, the legal constraints that govern its conduct, or the constitutional principles that define its legitimacy, is not merely professionally incomplete but potentially dangerous.

The Clausewitzian imperative for political education in military institutions has been recognized and acted upon in many democratic states. The United States Military Academy at West Point and the Naval Academy at Annapolis both require substantial coursework in political science, history, ethics, and international relations alongside the military-specific technical curriculum. The German Bundeswehr's officer education system at the universities of the Bundeswehr in Hamburg and Munich, which require all officer candidates to pursue bachelor's degrees before commissioning, was deliberately designed to ensure that Bundeswehr officers have genuine academic education in the humanities and social sciences alongside their military professional training. The Swedish Defence University's combination of military professional education with academically rigorous research programs reflects a similar institutional philosophy.

For Bangladesh, the Clausewitzian imperative is particularly pressing. The pattern of military political intervention that has characterized Bangladesh's post-independence history, analyzed extensively in Parts Five and Thirteen of this textbook, is partly a product of a military culture that has not been adequately educated in the political constraints that democratic civil-military relations require. Officers who understand military operations but not constitutional democracy, who understand strategic geography but not democratic accountability, who understand the use of force but not the legal and philosophical framework that limits its legitimate exercise, are

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

officers whose professional formation is incomplete in precisely the ways that have historically produced the pathologies that Bangladesh's governance reform agenda seeks to address.

1.4 The Pedagogical Revolution in Security Studies: From Cold War Frameworks to Twenty-First Century Challenges

The academic discipline of security studies, within which defense education is located, has undergone a profound intellectual revolution since the end of the Cold War that has significant implications for how defense education should be designed and delivered in 2026. Understanding this revolution, and its specific relevance to Bangladesh's situation, is essential for designing a curriculum architecture that is intellectually honest, practically relevant, and pedagogically effective.

The Cold War framework of security studies was dominated by nuclear deterrence theory, balance of power analysis, alliance management, and the military competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. These were not irrelevant questions, but they were questions that could be addressed primarily through quantitative, rationalist, and state-centric analytical frameworks that treated security as essentially about the military dimensions of interstate competition. The theoretical traditions of structural realism, deterrence theory, and alliance theory that dominated Cold War security studies curricula were intellectually sophisticated and analytically powerful within their domain, but they were limited in their ability to address the kinds of security challenges that have proved most consequential in the post-Cold War world.

The post-Cold War security studies revolution has been characterized by several major intellectual developments. The securitization theory developed by Ole Waever and the Copenhagen School broadened the concept of security beyond the military dimension, arguing that security is a speech act that can be applied to threats in economic, environmental, societal, and political domains. The human security framework, introduced by the UNDP in 1994, shifted the referent object of security from the state to the individual. Critical security studies, associated with scholars like Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, challenged the dominant paradigms' claims to political neutrality, arguing that mainstream security theory systematically served the interests of powerful states and marginalized the security concerns of the vulnerable. Feminist security studies, developed by scholars like J. Ann Tickner, Cynthia Enloe, and Christine Sylvester, revealed the gendered dimensions of security that mainstream frameworks consistently ignored.

More recently, constructivist approaches to security, associated with Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, and others, have demonstrated that the threats states perceive, the alliances they form, and the norms they observe are not simply determined by material factors but are socially constructed through processes of identity formation, norm internalization, and intersubjective understanding. Post-colonial and decolonial security studies, building on the work of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and the subaltern studies tradition, have argued that the very frameworks through which security is conceptualized in mainstream scholarship reflect the perspective of former colonial powers rather than the perspectives of the states and peoples whose security is most at risk.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

For Bangladesh's defense education curriculum, this intellectual revolution has several specific implications. First, the curriculum must engage seriously with the multiple dimensions of security, from conventional military threats through economic security, environmental security, and human security, rather than defaulting to the purely military framework that dominated Cold War security education. Second, the curriculum must engage with the critical and post-colonial perspectives that challenge the assumptions embedded in mainstream security theory, not to dismiss mainstream theory but to understand its limitations and to develop the intellectual independence that serious strategic analysis requires. Third, the curriculum must engage with the feminist and gender dimensions of security, not as an add-on but as a fundamental analytical category that is directly relevant to Bangladesh's specific security challenges including the gendered dimensions of the Rohingya crisis, the CHT conflict, and the counter-extremism challenge.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORY OF DEFENSE EDUCATION AS AN INTELLECTUAL PROJECT

2.1 The Institutional Origins of Professional Military Education

The formalization of military education as a distinct institutional activity, rather than something acquired entirely through operational experience and apprenticeship to senior officers, dates to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe, when the industrialization of warfare created both the technical complexity and the organizational scale that made educated officers systematically superior to uneducated ones.

The Prussian Kriegsakademie, or War Academy, established in Berlin in 1810 under the leadership of Gerhard von Scharnhorst, is generally regarded as the founding institution of modern professional military education. Its establishment was directly connected to the catastrophic Prussian defeat at Jena-Auerstedt in 1806, which demonstrated that Napoleon's professionally educated French officers systematically outperformed their Prussian counterparts in the qualities of adaptive judgment, staff work, and operational creativity that determined outcomes in mobile, fast-moving warfare. The Kriegsakademie's curriculum, which combined operational military subjects with history, geography, and philosophy, was designed to produce officers capable of the independent judgment that Clausewitz theorized as decisive in the friction of war.

The British Staff College at Camberley, established in 1858, and the American Naval War College at Newport, established in 1884, represented the diffusion of the Prussian model to the Anglo-American military establishments. Both institutions reflected the recognition that the scale and complexity of modern warfare exceeded what operational experience alone could prepare officers for, and that systematic academic study of military history, operational theory, and strategic thought was a necessary complement to practical military training.

The twentieth century saw the proliferation of professional military education institutions across virtually all significant military establishments, from the Japanese Imperial Staff College to the Soviet Frunze Academy to the Indian Staff College at Wellington. Each of these institutions

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

reflected the specific strategic culture and institutional priorities of its founding establishment, but all shared the fundamental premise that modern warfare is complex enough to require systematic academic preparation, not merely practical apprenticeship.

The post-1945 period brought a further evolution: the development of national war colleges and national defense universities that addressed strategic-level education rather than merely operational planning. The National Defense University system in the United States, encompassing the National War College, the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy, and the Joint Forces Staff College, was specifically designed to produce officers and civilian officials capable of thinking at the level of grand strategy and national security policy, above and beyond the operational and tactical levels that service-specific staff colleges addressed. The Australian Defence College, the Royal College of Defence Studies in London, and equivalent institutions in France, Germany, India, and Japan all represent variations on this model.

2.2 The Development of Civilian Defense Studies

The development of civilian defense studies as an academic discipline, distinct from professional military education, began primarily in the United States in the immediate post-World War II period and was driven by the specific intellectual challenges of the nuclear age. The creation of the Rand Corporation in 1948, as a research organization applying scientific and analytical methods to military problems, represented a new model for the production of strategic knowledge: not by military professionals drawing on operational experience but by civilian scholars drawing on the analytical tools of economics, mathematics, political science, and systems engineering.

The strategic studies revolution of the 1950s and 1960s, which produced the deterrence theory of Bernard Brodie, Herman Kahn, and Thomas Schelling, the arms control theory of Hedley Bull and John Strachey, and the civil-military relations theory of Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, was conducted primarily by civilian scholars working in universities and think tanks. These scholars brought to the analysis of military and security questions the methods and perspectives of academic disciplines, including formal modeling, historical analysis, philosophical reasoning, and comparative political science, that professional military education had historically neglected.

The institutionalization of strategic studies as an academic field was consolidated through the establishment of dedicated research centers and programs at major universities: the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, founded in 1958; the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, founded in 1966; the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria; the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi; the Australian Strategic Policy Institute; and dozens of university-based security studies programs across the democratic world. These institutions collectively created an intellectual infrastructure for civilian engagement with defense and security questions that provided governments with independent analysis, trained generations of civilian defense professionals, and sustained the academic freedom necessary for genuinely critical strategic thought.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.3 South Asian Comparative Experience: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka

The specific South Asian experience with defense studies institutions is directly relevant to Bangladesh's curriculum design, because these institutions have operated in broadly comparable political, cultural, and strategic contexts and their successes and failures offer lessons that European and American models, developed in very different circumstances, cannot fully provide.

India's defense studies infrastructure is the most developed in the region and has been built through sustained investment over five decades. The Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, established in New Delhi in 1965, has become one of the leading security research institutions in Asia, producing policy-relevant research on Indian strategic affairs, South Asian security, and global security issues. Its research output has directly influenced Indian defense policy, its publications reach international audiences, and its scholars occupy positions in government advisory roles, international academic conferences, and multilateral security forums. India's National Defence Academy, the National Defence College, the Defence Services Staff College at Wellington, and the College of Defence Management at Secunderabad together create a comprehensive professional military education system that, for all its limitations, represents a genuine institutional investment in the education of defense professionals.

The limitations of India's defense studies ecosystem are also instructive for Bangladesh. Despite five decades of institutional development, India's civilian defense expertise remains thin relative to the scale of India's military establishment and defense challenges. The Indian Parliament's defense oversight has historically been weak precisely because the parliamentary research staff lacks the defense expertise necessary for substantive engagement. The Ministry of Defence has chronically lacked civilian officials with genuine defense knowledge, making it structurally dependent on military officers for policy advice in ways that compromise civilian control. The gap between the academic defense studies community and the practical policy making community has been persistently wide, with research often failing to reach decision makers who lack the background to appreciate it.

Pakistan's defense studies infrastructure is dominated by military-affiliated institutions that, predictably, reflect the military's institutional perspective. The Pakistan Defence University, established in 2012, and the National Defence University, the renamed National Defence College, have produced research and analysis that is technically competent but often constrained by the institutional boundaries that military-controlled academic environments impose. Pakistan's experience illustrates the central problem of defense studies in states with strong military institutional cultures: when the military controls the educational and research institutions that study military affairs, the independence and critical engagement that serious defense scholarship requires are structurally compromised.

Sri Lanka's experience is more cautionary still. The prolonged civil conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam produced a generation of military officers with extensive operational experience but inadequate strategic and political education, contributing to the patterns of human rights abuse and post-conflict governance failure that have characterized Sri Lanka's post-war period. The absence of a genuinely independent civilian defense studies community in Sri Lanka meant that there was no intellectual infrastructure for the kind of critical assessment of military

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

strategy and civil-military relations that the conflict's trajectory demonstrated was urgently needed.

2.4 Bangladesh's Current Educational Infrastructure: An Honest Assessment

Bangladesh's current defense education infrastructure is built around a set of military institutions, some of which have developed genuine academic programs of real quality, and a virtual absence of civilian defense studies institutions of any significance. The contrast between the two dimensions of the system is stark and consequential.

The military professional education system, centered on the Defence Services Command and Staff College at Mirpur, the National Defence College, the Bangladesh Military Academy at Comilla, the Bangladesh Naval Academy at Patenga, and the Bangladesh Air Force Academy at Jessore, provides professional military education that, by regional standards, is of reasonable quality. The Defence Services Command and Staff College, established on 30 December 1977, has graduated over 5,979 officers from Bangladesh and from 43 different countries, offering an MSS in Military Studies through its affiliation with Bangladesh University of Professionals. Dscsc The DSCSC's international dimension, which includes significant numbers of officers from friendly countries attending each year, creates genuine multicultural professional learning environments and builds the international networks that contribute to Bangladesh's peacekeeping diplomacy and bilateral security relationships.

The Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, analyzed in Part Twelve of this textbook, provides specialized pre-deployment training for peacekeeping operations that has become recognized internationally as one of the better such institutions in the developing world. In September 2025, the NESA Center in Washington, D.C. welcomed 25 students and faculty from the Bangladesh National Defence College, along with seven officials and staff members from the Bangladesh Embassy, for a professional military education program, reflecting the growing engagement between Bangladesh's military education institutions and international partners. Nesa-center

The civilian dimension of Bangladesh's defense education infrastructure is, by contrast, almost non-existent in any meaningful sense. Bangladesh University of Professionals, established in 2009 primarily to provide degree-granting authority to the military's professional education programs, does not conduct serious independent research on defense and security questions and does not offer civilian undergraduate or graduate programs in security studies of any depth. Dhaka University's Department of International Relations offers graduate programs that touch on security issues but does not have dedicated faculty with deep defense policy expertise. BRAC University, North South University, and other private universities have developed international relations and political science programs of varying quality but none with serious defense studies concentration.

The think tank ecosystem in Bangladesh is particularly thin in the defense domain. The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, which does the most visible work in the defense and security area, is a semi-governmental institution whose research independence is constrained by its institutional connections to the government and the armed forces. It produces

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

policy-relevant analysis and hosts important events, but it does not have the academic independence, the depth of research expertise, or the critical engagement with Bangladesh's own defense establishment that genuinely independent defense scholarship requires.

The result of this institutional landscape is a defense policy community in which virtually all serious defense analysis is produced by military officers, who are institutionally positioned to have a particular perspective on defense questions, or by foreign scholars, who have valuable comparative frameworks but limited knowledge of Bangladesh's specific strategic and institutional context. The civilian policy makers, parliamentarians, judges, prosecutors, journalists, and civil society leaders who need to engage intelligently with defense questions have essentially no domestic institutional source of independent, expert analysis to draw on.

The scholarship emerging from Bangladesh's own academic community on defense policy, including recent work examining the need to rethink Bangladesh's national defense policy in the wake of the July 2024 uprising, reflects the growing awareness that existing academic frameworks are inadequate to the challenge and that new institutional infrastructure for defense studies is urgently needed. SSRN

CHAPTER THREE: COMPARATIVE MODELS FOR DEFENSE EDUCATION ARCHITECTURE

3.1 The Finnish National Defence University: Small State, Comprehensive Vision

Finland's approach to defense education provides perhaps the most directly relevant comparative model for Bangladesh, because Finland has built one of the most comprehensive and intellectually serious defense education systems in the world within the institutional and resource constraints of a small state with a population of approximately 5.5 million people. The National Defence University of Finland, established in its current form in 2008 through the consolidation of previously separate military education institutions, represents a deliberate policy choice to invest heavily in the educational foundations of Finland's total defense concept, and the results vindicate that investment.

The Finnish NDU offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs in military sciences through five departments: leadership and military pedagogy, tactics and operational art, military technology, security and strategic research, and military history. The institution's defining characteristic is its integration of the military professional education function with genuine academic research, conducted by faculty who are expected to maintain active research agendas alongside their teaching responsibilities and who publish in peer-reviewed academic journals alongside the institution's own policy-relevant research series.

The Finnish model's application to Bangladesh involves several specific lessons. First, the combination of military professional education with academic research functions within a single institution creates intellectual synergies that neither purely military professional education institutions nor purely civilian academic institutions can achieve alone. Military professionals who are engaged with the research community develop more sophisticated analytical

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

frameworks for their operational and strategic thinking. Civilian researchers who are engaged with military professional education develop more practical knowledge of the operational contexts in which their academic analysis must ultimately be applied.

Second, Finland's commitment to making its defense university's research publicly available, rather than classifying it as defense-sensitive, creates an intellectual resource that informs parliamentary debate, civil society engagement, and public understanding of security issues in ways that classified research cannot. The transparency principle, which Bangladesh's democratic defense governance framework requires, is advanced by the open publication of defense research rather than its restriction to cleared audiences.

Third, Finland's deliberate integration of civilian academic disciplines into the defense education curriculum, including political science, history, law, economics, and philosophy alongside the military-specific subjects, produces defense professionals whose analytical capabilities extend across the full range of questions that strategic and policy level engagement requires. An officer who has studied political philosophy, constitutional law, and international relations theory alongside military history and operational art is better prepared for the civil-military interface, the parliamentary oversight engagement, and the international diplomacy that Bangladesh's defense community must navigate than one whose education has been confined to military-specific subjects.

3.2 The South Korean Defense Model: Industrial Policy, Professional Education, and Academic Research

South Korea's defense education architecture is particularly relevant for Bangladesh because it has been built in the context of a democratic transition from military rule, a massive military modernization program, and the need to develop civilian defense expertise that can hold a powerful and historically politically active military institution accountable. South Korea's experience with building this infrastructure over three decades, from the mid-1980s democratic transition through the present, provides a detailed and instructive roadmap.

The Korea National Defense University, established in 1946 and substantially reformed in the 1990s following the democratic transition, offers advanced professional military education at the level comparable to the US National War College, with a curriculum that explicitly includes civil-military relations, democratic governance of the military, and human rights in armed conflict alongside the conventional military and strategic subjects. The reformulation of the KNDU's curriculum in the 1990s to explicitly include democratic civil-military relations as a core subject, rather than treating it as a peripheral add-on, represented a deliberate institutional commitment to embedding democratic values in the military professional education system.

The Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, or KIDA, is a semi-governmental research institution that produces defense policy analysis for the South Korean government while maintaining a degree of intellectual independence that purely governmental research bodies typically lack. KIDA's research output covers the full range of Korean defense policy challenges, from North Korean threat assessment through procurement economics to civil-military relations, and its publications reach both policy-making and academic audiences. KIDA provides the model for

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the kind of government-proximate but intellectually independent defense research institution that Bangladesh needs but currently lacks.

South Korea's development of a comprehensive civilian defense expertise through its university system, where security studies programs at major universities including Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University produce graduate students who go on to careers in the defense ministry, the intelligence services, parliamentary research, and civil society, represents the long-term infrastructure for civilian democratic oversight that Bangladesh's reform agenda requires. Building this university-based defense expertise is a generational project, but it is one that must begin immediately if Bangladesh is to have the civilian defense professionals it needs to implement the legislative reforms proposed in Part Thirteen within a decade.

3.3 Australia's Defence College System: Integrating Military, Civilian, and International Perspectives

Australia's approach to defense education provides a model for integrating military professional education with civilian academic research and international engagement in ways that are particularly relevant to Bangladesh's aspirations as a significant contributor to international peacekeeping and a participant in the evolving Indo-Pacific security architecture.

The Australian Defence College, established in Canberra, brings together the Australian Command and Staff College, the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, the Australian Defence College's academic teaching program, and the Directorate of Defence Learning in a single institutional framework that offers programs ranging from initial officer training through the equivalent of national war college education. The ADC's defining characteristic is its deliberate integration of civilian academic expertise: its faculty includes civilian academic scholars from Australian universities alongside military officers, and its programs draw on the full range of Australian academic expertise in history, political science, law, economics, and international relations.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, while not formally part of the ADC system, functions as the independent research arm of Australia's defense studies ecosystem. ASPI's combination of policy relevance, intellectual independence, media engagement, and international connectivity provides a model for the kind of independent think tank that Bangladesh needs. ASPI produces analysis that informs Australian parliamentary debate, challenges government defense policy assumptions, and contributes to international strategic analysis in ways that no governmental research institution can achieve, precisely because its independence from governmental control allows it to say things that governmental institutions cannot.

Australia's approach to international defense education engagement is also worth examining. Australian defense education institutions host students from partner countries across the Indo-Pacific, including Bangladesh, as a deliberate instrument of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. This engagement is not merely benevolent professional development; it is a systematic investment in building a network of regional defense professionals who have been exposed to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Australian institutional values, analytical frameworks, and democratic governance norms, and who maintain professional connections with Australian counterparts throughout their careers.

3.4 Israel's Defense Studies Infrastructure: Excellence Under Pressure

Israel's defense education system is worth examining not primarily as a model for Bangladesh to replicate but as an illustration of what is possible when a state facing genuine existential security challenges commits to building defense education infrastructure of the highest intellectual quality. Israel's approach demonstrates that small states facing severe security challenges need more sophisticated defense education, not less, because the quality of strategic judgment in such environments has genuinely existential implications.

The Fisher Institute for Air and Space Strategic Studies and the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University represent the civilian research dimension of Israel's defense studies infrastructure, both producing analysis that directly informs Israeli defense policy while maintaining genuine academic independence. The National Defense College of Israel and the various service-specific professional education institutions provide the military professional education component. The intersection of these civilian and military educational environments, fostered by Israel's reserve force system that keeps many of Israel's leading academic scholars connected to the military establishment, creates intellectual synergies that have made Israeli strategic studies one of the most intellectually productive in the world relative to the country's size.

For Bangladesh, the Israeli model offers a specific lesson about the relationship between academic freedom and defense education quality. Israel's defense studies institutions are genuinely critical of Israeli defense policy in ways that governmental research institutions rarely achieve: Israeli scholars have produced devastating analyses of specific military operations, procurement decisions, civil-military relations pathologies, and strategic failures that have directly influenced policy reform. This critical intellectual culture, which treats honest assessment as a defense imperative rather than a security risk, is precisely what Bangladesh's defense studies ecosystem needs to develop if it is to serve the democratic accountability functions that this textbook has consistently argued are inseparable from genuine security.

3.5 The Manohar Parrikar Institute: Lessons from the Indian Experience

The Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, which underwent a significant institutional renewal and rebranding in recent years following a period of reduced research productivity and institutional uncertainty, provides perhaps the most directly relevant institutional model for Bangladesh because of its similar regional context, similar institutional challenges, and similar research priorities.

The IDSA, as it was formerly known and is still commonly called, was established in 1965 with a mandate to produce policy-relevant research on Indian defense and security issues. Its research output over six decades has been genuinely significant in several areas: its analysis of India's nuclear policy has been influential in international arms control discussions, its work on South Asian security has established it as a major regional voice in security studies, and its research on

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Indian military doctrine has contributed to doctrine development in ways that purely governmental research cannot achieve.

The specific lessons for Bangladesh from the IDSA experience include both positive models and cautionary warnings. On the positive side, the IDSA demonstrates that a government-funded but intellectually semi-independent research institution can produce research of genuine quality and policy relevance, and that the investment required to sustain such an institution, while significant, is well within the means of states of Bangladesh's size and resource level. On the cautionary side, the IDSA's periodic vulnerabilities to governmental pressure, its difficulties in maintaining the research depth that requires long-term sustained investigation rather than rapid policy response, and its challenges in attracting and retaining the best academic talent at government salary levels all represent challenges that Bangladesh's equivalent institution will need to address through deliberate institutional design rather than assuming they will solve themselves.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CURRICULUM ARCHITECTURE FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE STUDIES SYSTEM

4.1 The Levels of Defense Education: From Basic Training to Advanced Strategic Studies

A comprehensive curriculum architecture for Bangladesh's defense studies system must address multiple levels of educational engagement, from the basic civic education about defense that all Bangladeshi citizens should receive through the advanced strategic education that the highest-level national security decision-makers require. These levels are not merely quantitatively different in depth and sophistication; they are qualitatively different in purpose, audience, and pedagogical approach.

The broadest level is civic defense education: the basic understanding of Bangladesh's security environment, constitutional framework for defense, democratic rights and responsibilities in relation to the security sector, and the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law that every Bangladeshi citizen should have. This education is delivered primarily through the general education system, from secondary school through university, and it requires that the relevant content be incorporated into the general curriculum rather than treated as a specialized subject for future defense professionals only. A citizenry that is educated about its constitutional rights in relation to security forces, that understands the principles of democratic accountability for defense expenditure, and that has basic knowledge of the legal framework governing the use of force is a citizenry that can more effectively participate in the democratic oversight of defense that this textbook has consistently argued is a security imperative.

The next level is undergraduate academic defense studies: the systematic academic treatment of security and defense issues for students pursuing bachelor's degrees who are interested in careers in the defense sector but are not yet at the professional level. This level requires dedicated academic programs at Bangladeshi universities offering courses in security studies, international

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

relations theory, strategic history, defense economics, international humanitarian law, and intelligence studies. The outputs of this level are not yet defense professionals but academically prepared individuals who can enter graduate programs, government careers, or research institutions with the foundational knowledge that subsequent professional development can build upon.

The next level is professional military education at the junior officer level: the systematic professional development of military officers in the first ten years of their careers, combining operational training with academic instruction in military history, doctrine, leadership, ethics, and the constitutional and legal framework governing the military's role in democratic governance. This level is primarily delivered through the service-specific professional education systems, the military academies and basic officer courses, but it requires curriculum reform to ensure that the democratic governance and civil-military relations content that has historically been peripheral or absent receives the prominence and pedagogical investment it deserves.

The mid-career level encompasses professional development for officers in the ten to twenty year career range, primarily delivered through command and staff college equivalents. Bangladesh's Defence Services Command and Staff College at this level has made genuine progress in developing a serious academic program, including the MSS in Military Studies offered through Bangladesh University of Professionals. But the curriculum requires enrichment in several dimensions: more serious engagement with civil-military relations theory, more substantive treatment of democratic governance and accountability, more genuine integration of international humanitarian law as operational rather than theoretical content, and more sophisticated engagement with the emerging security challenges of the Indo-Pacific strategic environment.

The senior level encompasses national-level strategic education for officers and civilians who will serve at the highest levels of the defense establishment and the national security architecture. Bangladesh's National Defence College provides this education, and it requires the most fundamental curriculum reform of any component of the existing system. The NDC's curriculum must engage seriously with strategic theory at the highest level, must produce graduates capable of contributing to the National Security Council's deliberations, and must include substantive civilian participation that creates the joint learning environments in which military officers and civilian officials develop the mutual understanding that effective civil-military relations require.

The post-graduate academic level provides advanced research training for the scholars and analysts who will generate the defense knowledge that informed policy requires. This level requires the establishment of genuinely academic doctoral programs in defense and security studies at Bangladesh's leading universities, with faculty conducting active research alongside their teaching, peer-reviewed publication requirements, and academic freedom protections that allow genuine critical engagement with Bangladesh's defense policy challenges.

4.2 The Core Curriculum for Democratic Defense Education: Foundational Subjects

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The core curriculum for Bangladesh's democratic defense education system must address a set of foundational subjects that appear at various levels of depth across the educational hierarchy. These subjects are not merely instrumentally valuable, useful for performing specific professional functions; they are constitutively important, essential to forming the educated judgment that democratic defense governance requires.

Strategic theory constitutes the first foundational subject. The student of strategic theory must engage with the classical tradition from Thucydides through Sun Tzu through Clausewitz, with the modern tradition from Mahan through Douhet through Liddell Hart, with contemporary theory in its realist, liberal, constructivist, and critical variants, and with the emerging strategic challenges of the information age, autonomous systems, and hybrid warfare. The purpose is not to convey doctrine but to develop the conceptual vocabulary and analytical disposition that allows practitioners to think systematically about the relationship between political ends and military means.

Constitutional and legal foundations form the second foundational subject. Every defense professional, military or civilian, must have a working understanding of Bangladesh's constitutional framework for defense, the international legal obligations that bind Bangladesh's military, the legal standards governing the use of force in both combat and internal security operations, and the legislative framework that authorizes and constrains defense activities. The current deficiency in this area is severe: many senior military officers have inadequate understanding of international humanitarian law as a practical operational constraint, and many civilian officials have inadequate understanding of the constitutional principles governing civil-military relations.

Civil-military relations theory constitutes the third foundational subject. This subject, which the comparative experience examined in Chapter Three demonstrates must be treated as a core professional competency rather than a peripheral topic, must be engaged at every level of the educational hierarchy. At the junior officer level, it begins with the constitutional principle of civilian supremacy and the professional obligation to respect it. At the mid-career level, it deepens to include the comparative history of civil-military relations in democratic states, the institutional mechanisms that make civilian control substantive rather than nominal, and the specific pathologies of civil-military relations in post-colonial states. At the senior level, it encompasses the full complexity of managing the civil-military interface in Bangladesh's specific institutional and historical context.

Defense economics forms the fourth foundational subject. The resources committed to defense are public resources whose allocation has direct consequences for national development. Understanding the economics of defense, including the opportunity costs of defense spending, the political economy of procurement decisions, the fiscal implications of major acquisition programs, and the economic dimensions of defense industrial policy, is essential for any serious defense professional. The current deficiency in this area is reflected in the disconnection between Bangladesh's stated defense ambitions and its fiscal realities that the $75 billion modernization proposal discussion in Part Fourteen illustrates.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Intelligence studies constitutes the fifth foundational subject. Intelligence is the informational foundation of all defense activity, and understanding how intelligence is collected, analyzed, assessed, and integrated into policy is essential for any professional operating at the senior levels of the defense system. The current absence of a serious intelligence studies curriculum in Bangladesh's defense education system is one of the most significant specific gaps that the curriculum reform agenda must address. Intelligence studies encompasses not merely the technical dimensions of collection and analysis but the democratic accountability, legal framework, and ethical constraints that distinguish democratic intelligence from authoritarian surveillance.

International humanitarian law and human rights law form the sixth foundational subject. The legal constraints on the use of force, the protections owed to civilians in conflict, the obligations of peacekeeping personnel, and the accountability frameworks for violations of these standards are not merely topics for specialist lawyers; they are operational requirements for every military officer who might direct or participate in operations involving the use of force. The current deficiency in this area has been documented throughout this textbook in its analysis of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and the failure to hold security force personnel accountable for violations of these standards.

Research methods form the seventh foundational subject, relevant primarily at the post-graduate academic level but with implications for the analytical training provided at lower levels. The ability to assess evidence, evaluate competing analytical frameworks, identify the limitations of one's own knowledge, and present conclusions with appropriate epistemic humility is the core analytical competency that serious strategic analysis requires. Defense professionals and civilian officials who cannot distinguish between evidence-based analysis and assertion, who cannot identify the assumptions embedded in competing strategic assessments, and who cannot assess the quality of intelligence products they receive are operationally and democratically dangerous, however well-intentioned they may be.

4.3 The Specific Curriculum Requirements for Civilian Defense Professionals

The civilian defense professional, broadly understood to include officials in the Ministry of Defense, parliamentary defense committee staff, prosecutors and judges handling military justice cases, intelligence oversight officials, defense procurement specialists, and defense policy analysts in research institutions and civil society, has educational requirements that are distinct from those of military professionals and that the existing educational system in Bangladesh does not address at all adequately.

The Ministry of Defense civilian professional requires a combination of defense policy expertise, public administration knowledge, and the specific technical competencies relevant to their function. A civilian defense budget analyst requires knowledge of defense procurement economics, program management, and the specific legislative framework governing defense appropriations. A civilian intelligence oversight official requires knowledge of intelligence law, civil liberties, and the operational realities of intelligence collection. A civilian defense industrial policy specialist requires knowledge of defense technology, international arms markets, and the economics of industrial policy. None of these professionals exists in adequate numbers in

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's current defense civilian workforce, and none can be produced without deliberate educational programs specifically designed to develop these competencies.

The parliamentary defense committee staff professional requires a combination of defense policy knowledge, legislative research skills, and security clearance-compatible analytical capacity. This professional must be able to analyze complex defense procurement proposals, assess intelligence threat assessments, evaluate military doctrine documents, and translate highly technical defense issues into language that enables meaningful parliamentary deliberation. The creation of this professional cadre requires the establishment of a Parliamentary Research Service with defense specialization, staffed by individuals who have graduate-level training in defense and security studies and who are committed to parliamentary service as a career rather than as a transit stop to other positions.

The defense procurement specialist requires a particularly demanding combination of competencies: technical knowledge of defense systems and their operational requirements, knowledge of international arms markets and supplier practices, understanding of procurement law and anti-corruption frameworks, project management skills, and the integrity and independence to make decisions based on genuine cost-effectiveness analysis rather than political or personal considerations. Producing this professional requires a specific graduate program in defense acquisition management, analogous to the Defense Acquisition University in the United States or the CASG Defense Acquisition University in Australia, that combines technical, legal, economic, and ethical training in a curriculum specifically designed for defense procurement responsibilities.

The intelligence and security law specialist requires deep knowledge of international human rights law, domestic constitutional law, intelligence oversight frameworks, and the operational realities of intelligence collection and analysis. This professional must be capable of designing and implementing the judicial warrant system for intelligence surveillance proposed in Part Thirteen, staffing the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner's office, and providing legal analysis to the parliamentary intelligence committee. Producing this professional requires the development of dedicated graduate-level programs in intelligence and security law at Bangladesh's law faculties, programs that do not currently exist.

4.4 The Specific Curriculum Requirements for Military Officers at Different Career Stages

Military officers require a distinctive educational program that combines the general democratic defense governance foundations with the military-specific operational and professional content that their roles require. The design of this program must navigate the tension between military professional culture, which values operational experience and practical skill above academic achievement, and the genuine intellectual demands of modern military leadership, which requires sophisticated analytical capability alongside operational competence.

At the initial officer education level, represented by the Bangladesh Military Academy and the equivalent service academies, the curriculum should be restructured to give democratic governance and civil-military relations content a significantly higher profile than it currently

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

receives. The current BMA curriculum, which follows a broadly traditional approach combining military training with academic coursework primarily in engineering and natural sciences, should be reformed to require substantial coursework in Bangladesh's constitutional history and legal framework, international relations theory, ethical theory with specific application to the use of force, and civil-military relations. The model of the United States Military Academy's core curriculum, which requires all cadets to complete courses in political science, international relations, ethics, and constitutional law alongside their military and engineering coursework, provides a specific template that Bangladesh can adapt.

At the captain and major career stage, delivered through branch-specific career courses and the early stages of staff training, the curriculum should develop the mid-level officer's analytical capabilities in the specific functional areas most relevant to their career trajectory. Officers destined for intelligence work should receive more systematic training in intelligence analysis methodology, legal constraints on intelligence collection, and the civil liberties implications of surveillance. Officers destined for logistics and procurement roles should receive training in defense acquisition management, anti-corruption principles, and the legislative framework for procurement oversight. Officers destined for civil-military relations and public affairs roles should receive training in media relations, political communication, and the specific sensitivities of military engagement with civilian society.

At the lieutenant colonel and colonel career stage, delivered primarily through the Defence Services Command and Staff College, the curriculum should combine the professional development content of a traditional command and staff course with deeper academic engagement in strategic theory, defense economics, and the civil-military relations dimensions of senior military leadership. The DSCSC's current program, which already offers a genuine academic component through the MSS in Military Studies, should be reformed to increase the proportion of the curriculum devoted to democratic governance, civil-military relations, and constitutional law while maintaining the operational planning and joint warfare content that the course's military professional purpose requires.

At the general and flag officer career stage, delivered primarily through the National Defence College, the curriculum should be comprehensively reformed to address the strategic leadership requirements of Bangladesh's most senior military positions. The NDC's program should develop participants' capacity to contribute to national-level strategic deliberation, to manage the civil-military interface at the highest levels, to understand and effectively navigate the constitutional and legislative framework within which the armed forces operate, and to lead institutional reform in the specific dimensions that Bangladesh's civil-military relations reform agenda requires. The inclusion of significant civilian participation, including senior officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, finance, and home affairs alongside military officers, is essential to creating the joint learning environment that genuine civil-military understanding requires.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY: INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN AND ACADEMIC ARCHITECTURE

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

5.1 The Case for a Bangladesh National Defense University

The most important single institutional decision in Bangladesh's defense education reform agenda is whether to establish a dedicated National Defense University that consolidates, coordinates, and elevates the existing defense education infrastructure rather than continuing to develop it in the fragmented, uncoordinated way that has produced the current inadequate system. This Part argues strongly for the establishment of such a university, on the basis of comparative experience, the specific needs of Bangladesh's defense studies ecosystem, and the administrative logic of defense education governance.

The case for a National Defense University rests on several distinct arguments. First, the economies of scale and scope that a dedicated university provides: the concentration of defense-focused academic faculty, research resources, library collections, and graduate programs in a single institutional framework creates intellectual synergies and research infrastructure that fragmented programs at multiple existing universities cannot replicate. Second, the institutional identity and mission clarity that a dedicated university provides: an institution whose entire purpose is defense education and research can develop a curriculum and culture specifically calibrated for that purpose in a way that a general university with a security studies program alongside dozens of other departments cannot. Third, the international engagement benefits that a recognized national defense university provides: international partners in the defense education domain engage most productively with dedicated national defense universities, and establishing such an institution would significantly enhance Bangladesh's ability to access international professional development programs, exchange programs, and collaborative research opportunities.

The comparative case for a Bangladesh National Defense University draws on the success of the institutions examined in Chapter Three: Finland's NDU, South Korea's KNDU, Australia's Defence College, India's emerging National Defence University. Each of these institutions has demonstrated that the consolidation of defense education functions within a dedicated university framework produces measurable improvements in research quality, curriculum coherence, and the institutional culture that democratic defense governance requires.

The institutional design of the proposed Bangladesh National Defence University should reflect several foundational principles. First, it should be a genuinely academic institution, with faculty appointment and promotion procedures based on research and scholarly merit rather than military rank or governmental preference. This principle, which sounds obvious when stated, is actually contested in many defense education systems, where the appointment of active or recently retired military officers to faculty positions rather than academically qualified scholars produces institutions with limited research productivity and insufficient intellectual independence from the military establishments they serve.

Second, the BNDU should have genuine academic freedom protections that allow faculty to conduct research and teach courses that are critical of Bangladesh's defense policy, that challenge the assumptions of the military establishment, and that engage with controversial dimensions of civil-military relations, procurement governance, and intelligence accountability without fear of institutional reprisal. The comparative experience consistently shows that defense studies

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

institutions without genuine academic freedom are less productive, less credible internationally, and less useful for the democratic accountability function that defense research must serve.

Third, the BNDU should have both a military professional education function and a civilian academic function within a single institutional framework, delivering professional development programs for military officers and graduate academic programs for civilian students simultaneously. The intellectual cross-pollination between these two functions, which both the Finnish and Australian models have demonstrated is among the most productive features of integrated defense university design, would address one of Bangladesh's most critical civil-military relations deficiencies: the mutual incomprehension between military professionals and civilian officials that currently characterizes Bangladesh's defense governance.

5.2 The Academic Structure of the Proposed Bangladesh National Defence University

The proposed Bangladesh National Defence University would be organized into four academic divisions, each addressing a distinct dimension of the institution's educational and research mission.

The Division of Military Studies would provide professional military education at all levels from junior officer to senior officer, including programs equivalent to the current DSCSC and NDC offerings but substantially reformed in curriculum content as described in Chapter Four. This division would be staffed by a combination of active military officers in research and teaching appointments and civilian academic faculty with expertise in military history, operational research, and military doctrine. The division's curriculum would balance the operational military content that military professional education requires with the democratic governance, legal, and political content that democratic civil-military relations demand.

The Division of Strategic and Security Studies would provide graduate academic programs, both masters and doctoral, for civilian students pursuing careers in defense-related government service, the defense industry, the NGO and civil society sector, and academic research. This division would conduct the research that Bangladesh's strategic studies community needs to generate, covering Bangladesh's specific strategic environment, comparative defense policy, intelligence and national security law, defense economics, and the intersection of security with development, human rights, and democratic governance. The division's faculty would be primarily civilian academics appointed through standard academic processes, with significant expectations for peer-reviewed research publication alongside teaching responsibilities.

The Division of Defense Technology and Innovation would address the technical dimensions of defense education and research that neither the military studies nor the strategic studies divisions cover adequately: defense systems analysis, emerging technology assessment, cyber and electronic warfare, defense acquisition management, and the economics of defense industrial development. This division would serve both military officers specializing in technical fields and civilian specialists in defense procurement, defense industry, and defense technology policy. It would maintain close connections with Bangladesh's engineering universities, particularly BUET, and with the defense industrial establishments discussed in Part Ten of this textbook.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Division of International Law and Human Rights would provide the specialized legal education that Bangladesh's defense governance reform agenda requires: international humanitarian law, human rights law in armed conflict, intelligence and national security law, the law of peacekeeping operations, and the constitutional framework for democratic defense governance. This division would serve both military officers who need operational legal expertise and civilian lawyers, judges, and prosecutors who will handle defense-related cases in civilian courts, intelligence oversight, and parliamentary accountability functions. It would maintain close connections with Bangladesh's law faculties and with international legal education institutions.

5.3 The Research Mandate and Publication Requirements

The research dimension of the proposed Bangladesh National Defence University is not a supplement to the teaching function but an integral element of the institution's core mission. The comparative experience consistently demonstrates that defense education institutions that maintain active research programs produce better teaching, attract better faculty, engage more productively with policy makers, and contribute more to the intellectual infrastructure of democratic defense governance than those that treat teaching as the primary function and research as a voluntary add-on.

The BNDU's research mandate should encompass both policy-relevant applied research and more fundamental academic research. Policy-relevant research addresses specific questions that Bangladesh's defense policy makers, military planners, parliamentary overseers, and civil society organizations need answered: what is the current state of Myanmar's armed groups' capabilities? What are the comparative costs and capabilities of different fighter aircraft options? What legislative models for intelligence oversight are most applicable to Bangladesh's constitutional framework? How does Bangladesh's peacekeeping contribution compare with peers in terms of effectiveness and accountability? This research is valuable because it directly informs the decisions that determine Bangladesh's security outcomes.

Fundamental academic research addresses the deeper theoretical and historical questions that provide the conceptual foundations for policy-relevant analysis: what explains the patterns of civil-military relations in post-colonial South Asian states? How do small states maintain strategic autonomy in environments of great power competition? What is the relationship between military professionalism and democratic accountability? How do international legal norms diffuse into domestic legal systems? This research is valuable because it develops the conceptual frameworks within which policy-relevant questions can be formulated and answered with genuine analytical rigor.

The BNDU should require its faculty to publish in both peer-reviewed academic journals and policy-relevant venues, including the BNDU's own publications series, Bangladesh's leading newspapers and policy journals, and international strategic studies publications that reach the global community of practice. The institutional incentive structure must reward both types of publication, rather than privileging either the academic venue that impresses international research evaluators or the policy venue that reaches immediate decision-making audiences.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The institution's relationship with Bangladesh's classified defense information requires careful management. Faculty conducting research on classified topics, such as specific intelligence operations, procurement negotiations, or operational plans, must have appropriate security clearances and research protocols that allow them to conduct informed research without compromising genuine operational security. The principle established in Part Thirteen, that classification should be used to protect information whose disclosure would create specific identifiable harm rather than as a blanket shield for institutionally embarrassing information, must apply to the BNDU's research activities.

5.4 The Governance Architecture of the Bangladesh National Defence University

The governance of the proposed BNDU requires an architecture that balances the military's legitimate interest in ensuring that the institution serves professional military education needs, the academic community's requirement for institutional autonomy and freedom, the government's interest in ensuring that the institution's research serves policy needs, and parliament's interest in democratic accountability for a publicly funded institution. Getting this balance right is among the most important and most technically demanding aspects of the institution's design.

The proposed governance architecture distinguishes between the institution's academic governance, the board of governors' strategic oversight, and the government's policy and resource engagement.

Academic governance, encompassing curriculum design, faculty appointment and promotion, research priorities, and academic standards, must be in the hands of academic decision-making bodies: a university senate with faculty representation that sets academic policy, academic appointment committees that make hiring decisions based on scholarly merit, and department chairs who manage the day-to-day academic operations of the divisions. Military officers should participate in these academic governance bodies in their capacity as subject-matter experts and stakeholders, not as commanding officers with authority to direct academic decisions.

The board of governors would provide strategic oversight and accountability for the institution's overall mission, budget, and performance. The board should include representatives from the Ministry of Defense, the parliamentary defense committee, the university faculty, the military establishment, and independent academic and civil society members. The inclusion of independent members, with no direct institutional interest in the institution's operation, is essential to preventing the capture of the board by any single stakeholder interest.

The government's policy engagement with the BNDU should be conducted through formal mechanisms, including a policy advisory council that channels government research priorities to the institution's research agenda, rather than through informal directorial relationships that compromise academic independence. The institution should have a statutory basis, established by the proposed National Defense Act discussed in Part Thirteen, that specifies its mandate, governance structure, and academic freedom protections.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER SIX: THE THINK TANK ECOSYSTEM: INDEPENDENT DEFENSE RESEARCH FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

6.1 The Role of Independent Think Tanks in Democratic Defense Governance

The think tank, as an institutional form, occupies a distinctive and essential position in the democratic defense governance ecosystem. It is neither a governmental research institution, whose analytical independence is constrained by its relationship to the government it serves, nor a purely academic institution, whose research agenda is driven by disciplinary norms that may be remote from immediate policy relevance. The think tank, at its best, combines the policy relevance of governmental research with the intellectual independence of academic inquiry, producing analysis that challenges governmental assumptions while remaining connected to the practical decisions that determine defense outcomes.

The genealogy of the defense think tank runs from the RAND Corporation's establishment in 1948, through the International Institute for Strategic Studies' founding in London in 1958, through the proliferation of national and regional defense research institutes that has occurred across the democratic world since the Cold War. What these institutions share is a commitment to producing research that is simultaneously rigorous and relevant, that serves democratic accountability by providing independent assessment of governmental defense decisions, and that contributes to the international community of practice in security studies that makes cross-national learning possible.

Bangladesh's current think tank ecosystem in the defense domain is, as documented in Chapter Two, essentially non-existent. The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies represents the only institution with a genuine defense policy research mandate, and its independence is compromised by its semi-governmental character and its institutional connections to the military establishment. The reform agenda requires the establishment of at least one genuinely independent defense research institution with the organizational structure, research funding, publication culture, and academic freedom that serious independent research requires.

The philosophical case for independent defense research draws on the epistemological argument for pluralism: the quality of any institution's analysis is improved by exposure to criticism from institutions that do not share its assumptions, do not have its institutional interests, and are not constrained by its political sensitivities. The Ministry of Defense's analysis of procurement decisions is necessarily affected by the ministry's institutional interest in defending those decisions. The military's assessment of threats is necessarily affected by the military's institutional interest in maintaining large forces against significant threats. Parliamentary staff analysis of defense budget proposals is necessarily affected by the partisan interests of the member whose staff it is. An independent think tank, whose only institutional interest is in producing credible analysis, provides the critical corrective to all of these institutional biases.

6.2 The Design of an Independent Bangladesh Defense Research Institute

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The establishment of a genuinely independent Bangladesh Defense Research Institute, which this Part recommends as the highest-priority institutional development in the defense studies ecosystem after the establishment of the BNDU, requires attention to the specific institutional design features that determine whether an organization described as independent is actually independent in practice.

The funding architecture is the most critical determinant of genuine independence. An institution funded entirely by the Bangladesh government, even if nominally independent, will experience implicit and sometimes explicit pressure to produce analysis that does not embarrass its funder. The sustainable funding model for a genuinely independent defense research institute should combine government core funding, which provides institutional stability, with competitive research grant funding from domestic and international sources, including international foundations, foreign government research agencies, and bilateral and multilateral development programs with security sector governance mandates.

The governance structure must include a board of directors that is majority independent of both government and military interests. Board members should be selected on the basis of scholarly, professional, or civil society credentials, and should include distinguished academics, retired senior officials who have genuinely independent perspectives, representatives of Bangladesh's legal and civil society communities, and international members with expertise in defense governance. The board should appoint and evaluate the institute's director on the basis of research performance and institutional reputation rather than political acceptability to the government.

The personnel architecture must create career incentives for serious, sustained research engagement rather than the production of rapid policy outputs that compromises analytical depth. Research fellows should have multi-year appointments that allow them to develop specialized expertise through sustained engagement with specific research questions. Publication in peer-reviewed academic journals should be an explicit performance criterion alongside policy-relevant publications, ensuring that the institute's analysis meets the standards of rigorous scholarship rather than merely the standards of politically acceptable government advice.

The publication culture must establish a strong presumption of public accessibility for all research outputs. The institute's working papers, policy briefs, and research reports should be published freely on its website and should be available without restriction to any interested reader. This open access publication policy is not merely a matter of democratic principle; it is a strategic decision about how to build the institution's reputation and influence. An institute whose analysis reaches parliamentarians, journalists, civil society organizations, and international scholars through freely accessible publications will have more influence on Bangladesh's defense governance than one whose analysis reaches only government officials through classified distribution.

6.3 The Comparative Research Agenda: What Bangladesh Needs to Know

The research agenda for Bangladesh's independent defense research institute must be grounded in an honest assessment of the specific knowledge gaps that are most consequential for

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's security outcomes. This assessment identifies five priority research areas where the absence of serious domestic analysis has allowed default assumptions and institutional orthodoxies to substitute for evidence-based understanding.

The first priority research area is Bangladesh's strategic environment and threat assessment. The formal threat assessments that the government produces are classified and are not subject to independent scrutiny. The academic literature on Bangladesh's strategic environment, while growing, remains thin and is often written by foreign scholars without adequate knowledge of Bangladesh's specific institutional and historical context. A sustained research program on Bangladesh's regional security environment, including the dynamics of the Bangladesh-India relationship, the evolving situation in Myanmar and its implications for Bangladesh's border security, the gray zone competition in the Bay of Bengal, and the internal security dimensions of extremism and the CHT situation, would provide Bangladesh's policy community with the independent analytical foundations that evidence-based defense policy requires.

The second priority research area is civil-military relations and democratic defense governance. The pathologies of Bangladesh's civil-military relations have been extensively documented by international human rights organizations and by academic scholars outside Bangladesh, but they have received insufficient analysis from within Bangladesh's own academic community. A research program that examines the specific historical, institutional, and cultural factors that have produced Bangladesh's civil-military relations patterns, that assesses the prospects for specific reform measures, and that tracks the progress of the post-2024 reform agenda against measurable benchmarks would provide the analytical foundation for the political advocacy and legislative design that genuine reform requires.

The third priority research area is defense procurement and defense economics. The economics of Bangladesh's defense program, including the fiscal implications of the proposed $75 billion modernization framework, the comparative cost-effectiveness of different procurement approaches, the economic impact of the military's commercial enterprises, and the macroeconomic consequences of alternative defense spending trajectories, represents a crucial knowledge gap. Politicians and civil society organizations that want to engage constructively with defense resource allocation decisions cannot do so without access to credible independent economic analysis of the trade-offs involved.

The fourth priority research area is peacekeeping governance and accountability. Bangladesh's extraordinary commitment to UN peacekeeping, analyzed in Part Twelve, has not been accompanied by the systematic research and evaluation that this commitment's scale and consequences warrant. A sustained research program examining the effectiveness of Bangladesh's peacekeeping contributions, the governance mechanisms for misconduct prevention and accountability, the economic dimensions of peacekeeping income and its management, and the strategic implications of the evolving UN peacekeeping environment would provide the analytical foundation for the peacekeeping policy reforms that both the strategic and the ethical analysis of Part Twelve identified as urgently needed.

The fifth priority research area is the emerging technology dimensions of Bangladesh's defense environment. Part Eleven of this textbook identified the specific emerging technology challenges

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

facing Bangladesh's defense policy: artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, quantum computing, cyber warfare, directed energy, and space. These domains require sustained research investment by scholars with both technical expertise and the security studies analytical frameworks to translate technical knowledge into policy-relevant conclusions. Building this research capacity within Bangladesh requires identifying and supporting the small number of Bangladeshi scholars who have both the technical and the strategic studies background to conduct this research effectively.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LEGAL EDUCATION FOR DEFENSE GOVERNANCE

7.1 The Jurisprudential Gap in Bangladesh's Legal Education

Bangladesh's law faculties, which produce the lawyers, judges, prosecutors, and legal scholars who will staff the constitutional and legislative reforms proposed in Part Thirteen, have historically devoted minimal attention to the specific areas of law most relevant to democratic defense governance. Military law, intelligence law, international humanitarian law, and the constitutional dimensions of civil-military relations are all areas in which Bangladesh's legal education offers inadequate preparation, with consequences that are directly visible in the governance failures that this textbook has documented.

The jurisprudential gap is not merely a matter of curriculum omission. It reflects a deeper orientation of Bangladesh's legal tradition toward private law, commercial law, and general criminal procedure, and away from the public law dimensions of the state's use of coercive power that democratic governance requires lawyers to understand and challenge. The colonial legal tradition, which Bangladesh inherited and has modified only partially, was designed to administer a subject population rather than to hold the state accountable to the people it governs, and this orientation persists in the legal culture as well as in specific statutory provisions.

The reform of Bangladesh's legal education for democratic defense governance requires attention to three distinct levels: the initial legal education provided at the three-year LL.B. and four-year honors LL.B. programs at Bangladesh's law faculties, the graduate legal education provided through LL.M. programs and doctoral programs, and the continuing legal education provided to practicing lawyers, judges, and prosecutors.

At the initial legal education level, all law students should receive at least one mandatory course in public international law that seriously addresses international humanitarian law, human rights law, and the law of the sea, since these are the international legal frameworks most directly relevant to Bangladesh's security governance. The current treatment of international law in Bangladesh's law curricula is typically superficial and focuses on commercial dimensions, with inadequate attention to the humanitarian and security dimensions. A mandatory human rights law course covering the constitutional protections and international treaty obligations relevant to security force conduct should also be required.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

At the graduate level, dedicated LL.M. programs in international humanitarian law and national security law should be established at Bangladesh's major law faculties. These programs should train the specialist lawyers who will staff the intelligence oversight commissioner's office, the military justice reform institutions, the parliamentary legal services, and the academic faculty positions that the BNDU's Division of International Law and Human Rights requires. International models for these programs are available from institutions including the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, the University of Nottingham's Minerva Centre for the Rule of Law under Extreme Conditions, and the American University Washington College of Law's program on law and security.

7.2 International Humanitarian Law as an Operational Discipline

International humanitarian law, the law of armed conflict, the jus in bello, is not merely a subject for specialist lawyers. It is an operational discipline whose principles must be internalized by every military officer who might direct or participate in operations involving the use of force. Part Thirteen of this textbook identified the accountability gap in Bangladesh's military justice system, the pattern of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture that have characterized security force operations, as the most serious specific governance failure in Bangladesh's defense sector. This gap is partly attributable to inadequate education in the practical application of IHL principles.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has worked with Bangladesh's military for decades to develop IHL training programs, and Bangladesh's military has undergone ICRC-sponsored training at multiple levels. But the evidence of systematic violations documented by the OHCHR and human rights organizations suggests that this training has been inadequate in either depth or enforcement to produce genuine behavioral change. The problem is not that officers do not know the rules in abstract terms; it is that the institutional culture does not support their application in practice, and the accountability mechanisms that would create incentives for compliance are absent.

Genuine integration of IHL into military operational culture requires more than classroom training. It requires that IHL principles be embedded in rules of engagement, standard operating procedures, and operational planning processes. It requires that legal advisors with genuine IHL expertise be integrated into operational command structures at all levels rather than confined to headquarters positions. It requires that violations of IHL be investigated and prosecuted consistently and visibly, creating the deterrent that transforms abstract legal knowledge into operational practice. And it requires that the military's own institutional culture regard IHL compliance as a marker of professional excellence rather than as an external constraint on operational freedom.

The curriculum reform proposals in this chapter are therefore not sufficient on their own to produce the IHL compliance that Bangladesh's constitutional and international legal obligations require. They must be accompanied by the institutional reforms to the military justice system described in Part Thirteen, the intelligence oversight mechanisms that will provide accountability for intelligence-related violations, and the democratic civil-military relations reforms that will

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

create the political environment in which civilian oversight can hold security forces to the legal standards that the educational reforms have taught them.

7.3 The Military Legal Service: Institutional Design and Curriculum Requirements

The proposed Military Legal Service, introduced as an institutional reform in Part Thirteen, requires a specific educational architecture to produce the qualified military lawyers who will staff it. The Military Legal Service's functions, advising courts martial, representing accused persons, monitoring compliance with the Military Justice Reform Act, and providing legal advice on the laws of armed conflict and rules of engagement, require a combination of legal education and military operational knowledge that standard civilian legal education does not provide and standard military professional education does not address.

The curriculum requirements for Military Legal Service personnel include, at a minimum, a law degree with substantial coursework in international humanitarian law, constitutional law, criminal procedure, and military law; a period of supervised practice in general legal work before specialization in military law; and a specialized military law program that combines military professional education with the specific legal knowledge required for military justice functions. The closest existing model is the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the United States military, whose members receive both basic officer training and law school education before attending the Judge Advocate Officer Basic Course at Charlottesville, Virginia.

Bangladesh should establish a JAG Corps equivalent within each service, staffed by officers who are qualified lawyers with specialized military law education. The educational pipeline for these officers should include the standard officer education at the relevant service academy, graduation from a recognized law faculty, and a specialized military law program of approximately six months covering military justice procedures, rules of engagement law, international humanitarian law, and the constitutional framework of civil-military relations. This specialized program should be offered at the BNDU's Division of International Law and Human Rights, creating an institutional connection between the military's internal legal function and the broader civilian legal education environment.

CHAPTER EIGHT: PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE OVERSIGHT

8.1 The Parliamentary Knowledge Deficit and Its Consequences

The failure of democratic defense oversight in Bangladesh is not primarily a failure of parliamentary willingness. It is a failure of parliamentary capacity. The members of the parliamentary defense committee, whatever their political orientations and however genuine their commitment to oversight, lack the technical knowledge of defense matters, the access to classified information, and the professional support staff that effective oversight requires. A

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

committee member who does not understand the difference between a frigate and a corvette, who cannot assess the strategic rationale for a specific weapons acquisition, and who lacks the technical background to evaluate competing cost estimates for a major procurement program cannot exercise meaningful oversight of defense expenditure regardless of how diligently they read the publicly available documents.

This parliamentary knowledge deficit is not unique to Bangladesh. It is a recognized challenge in many parliamentary democracies, and the international experience provides both evidence of its consequences and models for addressing it. The United Kingdom's House of Commons Defence Committee, which is widely regarded as one of the more effective parliamentary defense oversight bodies in the democratic world, has developed its effectiveness over decades through the combination of expert professional staff, security clearances for committee members and staff, the authority to conduct independent investigations with access to classified information, and the institutional culture of bipartisan engagement with defense issues that treats scrutiny as a professional responsibility rather than a partisan weapon.

The specific knowledge deficits that Bangladesh's parliamentary defense committee members and staff most urgently need to address include defense procurement economics and the assessment of value for money in major acquisition programs; strategic threat assessment and the analytical frameworks for evaluating the intelligence community's assessments; international humanitarian law and the legal constraints on security force operations; civil-military relations theory and the specific historical and institutional context of Bangladesh's civil-military dynamics; and defense budget analysis, including the specific expertise required to assess the fiscal implications of different defense program options.

8.2 The Parliamentary Staff Training Program for Defense Oversight

The most immediately actionable reform for building parliamentary capacity in defense oversight is the establishment of a Parliamentary Staff Training Program in Defense and Security Studies, designed specifically for the professional staff of the parliamentary defense committee and the defense and security functions of other parliamentary committees with defense-relevant oversight responsibilities.

This program should be designed as a twelve-month fellowship, combining formal coursework with practical supervised engagement in defense oversight activities. The coursework component should cover the foundational subjects identified in Chapter Four of this Part at a level appropriate for non-specialist professionals who need working knowledge rather than deep expertise: strategic theory, defense procurement economics, constitutional and legal framework, intelligence studies, and the comparative experience of parliamentary defense oversight. The practical component should include supervised participation in defense committee hearings, engagement with the Parliamentary Research Service's defense analysis function, and analysis of specific procurement decisions or strategic assessments as structured learning exercises.

International partnerships are essential to building this program's quality quickly rather than waiting for the full development of Bangladesh's own defense studies infrastructure. Programs at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Centre of Ottawa, and various bilateral

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

parliamentary cooperation programs offer both direct training opportunities and models for program design. The United States Congress's exchange programs for parliamentary staff, managed through the Library of Congress, provide a specific opportunity for Bangladesh's parliamentary defense staff to observe the most developed congressional defense oversight system in the world.

The security clearance issue requires specific attention in the design of the parliamentary staff training program. Meaningful oversight of classified defense activities requires parliamentary staff with appropriate clearances, and the development of a parliamentary security clearance system that is both operationally credible and sufficiently independent of executive control to be trusted by parliament is among the most technically demanding aspects of the broader parliamentary capacity reform agenda.

8.3 Parliamentary Research Services for Defense

The establishment of a specialized Parliamentary Research Service with defense and security expertise is among the institutional reforms that would most directly and immediately improve the quality of Bangladesh's parliamentary defense oversight. Parliamentary research services exist in most mature parliamentary democracies as a non-partisan professional resource available to all members and committees, providing research support, analytical services, and expert assessment that supplement the partisan political advice of members' personal offices and party research units.

Bangladesh's Parliament Secretariat does not currently have a specialized defense and security research function. The creation of such a function, staffed by parliamentary researchers with graduate education in defense and security studies and appropriate security clearances, would transform the parliamentary committee's capacity for genuine substantive engagement with defense questions. These researchers would not substitute for members' political judgment; they would provide the factual and analytical foundation upon which that judgment can be exercised with genuine knowledge rather than reliance on executive-provided information.

The philosophical basis for a genuinely independent parliamentary research service draws on the separation of powers principle and its application to the information environment of democratic governance. If the executive branch controls not only the actions it takes in the defense domain but also the information available for parliamentary scrutiny of those actions, the democratic accountability function of parliament is structurally compromised. An independent parliamentary research service, with access to classified information through appropriate security arrangements, with the authority to commission independent technical assessments, and with the institutional independence to present findings that challenge executive positions, is a necessary element of genuinely balanced information availability for democratic oversight.

CHAPTER NINE: CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON DEFENSE

9.1 The Role of an Informed Public in Democratic Defense Governance

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The ultimate principal in Bangladesh's democratic defense governance system is the Bangladeshi people, whose security the defense establishment is meant to protect and whose consent legitimizes the resources committed to defense. But a public that is uninformed about defense issues, that has no access to credible independent analysis of security questions, and that cannot hold its elected representatives accountable for defense decisions because it lacks the knowledge to evaluate them, is a public that cannot effectively exercise the democratic sovereignty that Bangladesh's Constitution asserts.

The development of an informed public discourse on defense and security issues is therefore not a luxury of mature democracies but a foundational requirement of genuine democratic governance. It requires investment in media literacy and defense journalism, in civil society organizations with defense competence, in public education programs that engage citizens with the democratic dimensions of their country's security choices, and in the information environment that allows genuine democratic deliberation rather than manipulation and propaganda.

Bangladesh's current public discourse on defense is characterized by a combination of institutional opacity, which prevents informed public engagement, and politically charged narrative frameworks, which substitute partisan loyalty for genuine analytical engagement. When defense policy is discussed publicly, it is typically in terms of which political party is more patriotic, which adversary is most threatening, or which arms purchase is most impressive, rather than in terms of whether specific capability investments represent genuine strategic value, whether the procurement process was transparent and accountable, or whether the civil-military relations framework adequately protects constitutional rights.

The transformation of public defense discourse requires the concurrent development of multiple institutional capacities: a defense journalism capacity that produces credible independent reporting on defense issues, a civil society advocacy community with the expertise to engage constructively with defense policy, a legal services capacity that provides access to judicial accountability for security force abuses, and an academic publication ecosystem that makes serious defense analysis accessible to non-specialist audiences.

9.2 Defense Journalism: Building Specialized Reporting Capacity

Defense journalism, the specialized practice of reporting on military affairs, defense procurement, intelligence activities, and security policy, is among the most demanding and most consequential forms of journalism. It requires technical knowledge that most generalist journalists do not have, access to sources in the classified world that requires years of relationship-building and trust-development, and the moral courage to report on powerful and sometimes dangerous institutions in ways that may attract personal risk.

Bangladesh's defense journalism capacity is extremely limited. The few reporters who cover defense issues regularly are predominantly generalists without the technical background to engage with complex procurement controversies, the classified access that would allow them to assess the veracity of official statements, or the institutional protection from powerful security forces that investigative reporting on defense would require. The result is a defense journalism

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

landscape dominated by official press releases, anonymous security official briefings, and the occasional dramatic story that emerges from leaks or human rights organization reports, rather than the sustained, technically informed, independently verified reporting that democratic accountability requires.

The development of defense journalism capacity requires investment at multiple levels. At the journalism education level, Bangladesh's media and communication faculties should offer courses in defense and security reporting, covering the technical knowledge required to understand defense issues, the legal framework for freedom of information in the security domain, the ethical challenges of reporting on sensitive security matters, and the historical and comparative context that gives specific defense stories their significance. At the professional level, the creation of a fellowship program that provides experienced journalists with specialized defense education, analogous to the programs offered by the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment, and the Knight Center for Journalism at the University of Texas, would develop the community of technically capable defense reporters that Bangladesh currently lacks.

The institutional protection of defense journalists from retaliation by security forces is among the most challenging aspects of this agenda in Bangladesh's current environment. The history of security force intimidation of journalists who report on military abuses, documented by Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and Bangladesh's own press freedom organizations, creates a genuine deterrent to investigative defense journalism that no educational program alone can overcome. The legislative reforms proposed in Part Thirteen, particularly the repeal or fundamental reform of the Cyber Security Act and the strengthening of press freedom protections, are necessary preconditions for the development of the defense journalism culture that democratic accountability requires.

9.3 Civil Society Organizations and Defense Accountability

Civil society organizations, including human rights organizations, anti-corruption organizations, peace and security advocacy groups, and professional associations, play an essential role in democratic defense governance by providing independent monitoring, advocacy, and accountability functions that neither the parliament nor the courts can fully perform. The development of a civil society capable of engaging constructively and credibly with defense policy requires both organizational development within civil society and the enabling environment, including legal protections and information access, that makes effective civil society engagement possible.

Bangladesh's civil society has historically been more active in the domains of human rights and anti-corruption than in the specifically defense domain, partly because the classified and militarized character of defense issues makes civil society engagement more difficult, and partly because the security risks of engaging with the military establishment have historically been greater than the risks of engaging with civilian governmental institutions. The post-July Revolution environment, with its reduced institutional barriers to civil society engagement and its greater tolerance of critical public discourse, creates an opening for the development of defense-focused civil society capacity that has not previously existed.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The organizational capacities that a defense-engaged civil society requires include technical expertise in defense economics, procurement governance, international humanitarian law, and strategic analysis; access to defense-relevant information through both official freedom of information mechanisms and the investigative relationships that experienced civil society organizations develop with insiders; the legal capacity to challenge security force conduct and defend civil society actors from retaliatory prosecution; and the communication capacities to reach public audiences, parliamentary members, and international organizations with credible independent assessments of defense governance quality.

Building these capacities within civil society organizations requires both funding and the enabling environment that the legislative reforms proposed in Part Thirteen provide. International civil society organizations including Transparency International's Defense and Security Programme, the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, and the Carter Center have programs specifically designed to support the development of civil society defense governance capacity in developing democracies, and Bangladesh's civil society organizations should actively engage these international partnerships as they develop their own organizational capabilities.

CHAPTER TEN: PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND THE DEMOCRATIC VALUES IMPERATIVE

10.1 The Challenge of Instilling Democratic Values in Military Institutions

The cultivation of genuine democratic values within military institutions, as distinct from the mere external compliance with democratic norms that an unconstrained military might practice when under observation, is one of the most intellectually demanding challenges in civil-military relations. The difficulty is both empirical and philosophical: empirically, the evidence that professional military education can reliably produce genuine value internalization rather than surface compliance is mixed; philosophically, the question of whether institutional education can form genuine values, as Aristotle's habituation theory claims, or merely trains behavior while leaving underlying dispositions unchanged, is genuinely contested.

The philosophical tradition most relevant to this challenge is the Aristotelian account of moral education through habituation, examined at the opening of Part Fifteen. Aristotle's argument in the Nicomachean Ethics is that virtues are formed through practice: we become just by doing just acts, courageous by doing courageous acts, temperate by doing temperate acts. The virtuous person is not one who overcomes natural inclinations through self-discipline but one whose character has been formed through sustained practice until virtuous action is natural rather than effortful. Applied to military education, this Aristotelian logic suggests that democratic values must be instilled not through classroom instruction alone but through the sustained practice of democratic behaviors in the institutional environment of military education: through the experience of being held accountable for one's actions, of having one's authority limited by constitutional rules, of treating subordinates with dignity and respect, and of subordinating one's institutional preferences to democratic decisions.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The German Bundeswehr's Innere Fuhrung concept represents the most systematic attempt to implement this Aristotelian approach in military institutional design. Innere Fuhrung, or internal leadership, is not merely a set of rules governing military conduct but a comprehensive institutional philosophy that embeds democratic values into the military's self-understanding as a profession. The Staatsburger in Uniform, the citizen in uniform, is not merely a metaphor but an operational concept: the Bundeswehr soldier is first a citizen with constitutional rights and democratic responsibilities, and second a military professional whose specialized function is exercised within the constraints that democratic citizenship imposes. This concept is operationalized through the education curriculum at the universities of the Bundeswehr, through the personnel selection and promotion systems that reward democratic behavior, and through the complaint mechanisms, particularly the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, that provide accountability when democratic norms are violated.

For Bangladesh, the application of the Innere Fuhrung concept requires both curriculum reform and institutional culture change that extend well beyond the formal educational environment. The curriculum reforms proposed in this chapter are necessary but not sufficient; they must be accompanied by the institutional reforms proposed in Part Thirteen that create the accountability mechanisms, the command climate, and the professional incentive structures that make democratic behavior in Bangladesh's military sustainable rather than episodic.

10.2 The Case of the 2009 Pilkhana Mutiny and Its Educational Lessons

The February 2009 Pilkhana Mutiny, in which Bangladesh Rifles soldiers killed 74 officers and family members during the annual BDR Week dinner, was among the most catastrophic institutional events in Bangladesh's security history and contains lessons for professional military and paramilitary education that have not been adequately drawn. The mutiny arose from a combination of organizational grievances, most immediately the economic and professional status differentials between BDR enlisted soldiers and the army officers commanding them, and institutional factors including the absence of effective grievance mechanisms, the failure of leadership to identify and address the deteriorating institutional climate, and the specific event dynamics of the February 25 dinner.

The educational lessons of Pilkhana are multiple. The first is the lesson about the institutional climate conditions that produce catastrophic violence: when organizational grievances accumulate without legitimate resolution mechanisms, when the gap between the formal hierarchy's claims of authority and the functional quality of its leadership is wide, and when specific triggering events occur in a context of accumulated tension, violence that would be unthinkable in normal conditions becomes possible. Military education must prepare officers to recognize and address these climate conditions rather than simply commanding compliance.

The second lesson is about the relationship between organizational culture and individual moral agency. The soldiers who participated in the mutiny were not, in general, pathological individuals; they were people whose organizational context had normalized a set of behaviors that moral reasoning in a different context would have recognized as criminally wrong. This observation does not excuse the killings, which were profoundly wrong; but it does establish the institutional culture dimension of the educational challenge. An officer corps whose education

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

has emphasized legal technical compliance rather than genuine ethical formation, and a paramilitary force whose organizational culture has been shaped by accumulated grievance rather than genuine professional pride, are institutionally vulnerable to precisely the kind of breakdown that Pilkhana represented.

The third lesson is about the post-event institutional response and its educational implications. The prosecution of thousands of BDR soldiers in proceedings that international observers criticized for failing to meet due process standards, while the systemic organizational failures that created the conditions for the mutiny received inadequate analysis and reform, represents exactly the pattern of institutional self-protection that democratic defense governance is designed to prevent. An institution that responds to catastrophic failure by prosecuting its lowest-ranked participants while shielding the institutional and command failures that enabled the event has learned nothing from the tragedy and has failed the most important educational test of institutional culture: the willingness to engage in honest self-assessment.

10.3 The BMA Curriculum and Its Reform Requirements

The Bangladesh Military Academy at Comilla, which provides the foundational professional education for army officers, is the institutional environment in which the democratic values that will shape the military's institutional culture for the next generation are either instilled or neglected. The curriculum reform proposals in this chapter have their most consequential application at the BMA, because the values and habits of thought formed in the four years of initial officer education are the most durable of any professional formation.

The current BMA curriculum, structured around a combination of military training, physical education, and academic coursework primarily in engineering and science subjects, reflects the priorities of a military establishment that values technical competence and operational readiness above the political and ethical education that democratic civil-military relations require. This prioritization is not entirely wrong: technical competence and operational readiness are genuine military requirements. But the curriculum's relative neglect of constitutional law, political theory, ethics, international humanitarian law, and civil-military relations theory represents a significant imbalance that produces officers who are operationally capable but civically underprepared for the roles they will eventually play at the interface between military institutions and democratic governance.

The proposed BMA curriculum reform would maintain the existing technical and operational core while adding or substantially expanding the following academic requirements. First, a Constitutional Law and Democratic Governance course of at least one semester duration, covering Bangladesh's constitutional framework, the principle of civilian supremacy, the legal constraints on military operations, and the comparative experience of civil-military relations in democratic states. Second, an International Humanitarian Law and Military Ethics course of at least one semester duration, covering the laws of armed conflict with specific application to likely operational scenarios, the ethical foundations of the professional military ethic, and the decision-making frameworks that military ethics requires in morally complex operational situations. Third, an Introduction to Security Studies and Strategic Theory course covering the major theoretical traditions in international security, the specific strategic challenges of

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's regional environment, and the conceptual frameworks that strategic analysis requires.

These additions do not require eliminating existing curriculum elements; they require accepting that the BMA's role is to form military officers who are educated as citizens and as professionals rather than merely as technical specialists. The model of the United States Military Academy, which produces graduates who are simultaneously commissioned officers and holders of bachelor's degrees with mandatory coursework in the liberal arts and social sciences, demonstrates that this integration of military and civilian education is both achievable and valuable.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEFENSE EDUCATION

11.1 The Strategic Value of International Defense Education Engagement

Bangladesh's integration into the international professional military education community, through its peacekeeping contributions and its bilateral security relationships, has created a network of educational connections that represents one of its most valuable but least systematically leveraged defense assets. Officers who have studied at professional military education institutions in India, Pakistan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and numerous other countries bring back not only technical knowledge but exposure to different institutional cultures, professional norms, and analytical frameworks that enrich Bangladesh's own military culture and strategic thinking.

The strategic management of international education partnerships requires a systematic framework that aligns specific educational opportunities with Bangladesh's specific capability development requirements and civil-military relations reform agenda, rather than treating international educational opportunities as a patronage system for individual officer career advancement. The choice of where to send officers for international education, which programs they attend, and what they do with the knowledge and relationships they acquire on return, should be driven by institutional strategic considerations rather than by personal preferences or bilateral diplomatic obligations.

The most valuable international education partnerships for Bangladesh's democratic defense governance reform agenda are those that expose officers to the institutional cultures of established democracies with strong civil-military relations traditions: Germany's Bundeswehr, whose Innere Fuhrung tradition represents the most systematic institutional effort to embed democratic values in a professional military; Australia's Australian Defence Force, which has invested heavily in the development of civilian defense expertise and parliamentary oversight capacity; Japan's Self-Defense Forces, whose careful navigation of civilian constitutional constraints despite operational pressures provides a specific model for democratic civil-military relations under strategic stress; and the Nordic militaries, which combine genuine military effectiveness with the highest levels of transparency, accountability, and democratic integration in the world.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The management of Chinese military education relationships requires specific strategic attention given the depth of Bangladesh's defense supply relationship with China and the growing number of Bangladeshi officers who attend professional military education in China. Chinese professional military education, which emphasizes loyalty to political authority, the primacy of party control over the military, and a strategic worldview centered on China's specific national interests, provides both valuable technical knowledge and values formation that may not align with the democratic civil-military relations principles that Bangladesh's reform agenda seeks to build. The existence of Chinese military education relationships does not mean that Bangladesh should not send officers to Chinese institutions; but it does mean that the knowledge and values acquired in Chinese education should be complemented by education in democratic military institutions that presents a different and in important respects more relevant set of values and models.

11.2 The Bangladesh-NESA Partnership and Its Expansion Potential

The engagement between Bangladesh's National Defence College and the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, D.C., documented in the search results and mentioned in the foreword to this Part, represents a model for the kind of productive international defense education partnership that Bangladesh's civil-military relations reform agenda can leverage. The NESA Center welcomed 25 students and faculty from the Bangladesh National Defence College, along with seven officials and staff members from the Bangladesh Embassy, for a professional military education program in Washington, D.C. in September 2025, reflecting the growing engagement between Bangladesh's defense education establishment and American security education institutions. Nesa-center

This engagement provides Bangladesh's NDC faculty and students with exposure to the American security education tradition, its analytical frameworks, its institutional values, and the network of security professionals from across the Near East and South Asia who participate in NESA programs. The relationships formed in these programs extend across careers and across institutional boundaries, creating the informal networks that supplement and sometimes substitute for formal institutional connections in the security domain.

The expansion potential of the NESA partnership, and of equivalent partnerships with the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany, the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii, and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, lies in the systematic development of these informal networks into structured professional development pipelines. Bangladesh could develop agreements with these institutions that provide not merely episodic attendance at seminars but sustained engagement through long-term fellowship programs, research collaboration, curriculum development assistance, and the development of Bangladesh-specific case study materials that give the American institutional perspective a Bangladesh-relevant application.

The political sensitivity of deepening American security education partnerships must be acknowledged honestly. In Bangladesh's current strategic context, with the BNP government managing a complex relationship with the United States that includes both the GSOMIA and ACSA negotiations analyzed in Part Fourteen and the broader question of Bangladesh's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

alignment in the US-China competition, the expansion of American security education partnerships carries political implications that must be managed with diplomatic sophistication. The principle established throughout this textbook applies: the goal is to maximize the educational benefits of international partnerships without creating the alignment dependencies that would compromise Bangladesh's strategic autonomy.

11.3 The Role of International Organizations in Defense Education Support

Several international organizations have specific programs designed to support the development of defense education infrastructure in developing democracies, and Bangladesh should engage these programs systematically rather than on the ad hoc basis that characterizes current engagement.

The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, DCAF, which organized the important December 2025 conference on security sector reform in Dhaka in partnership with the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies, has extensive programs in parliamentary oversight capacity building, security sector governance education, and civil society engagement with defense issues. DCAF's programs are specifically designed for the post-conflict and democratic transition contexts that are most relevant to Bangladesh's current situation, and its curriculum resources, developed through decades of security sector reform programming across multiple countries, provide immediately applicable materials for Bangladesh's reform agenda.

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the UN's broader peacebuilding and security sector reform programming provide additional resources for Bangladesh's defense education development, with particular relevance to the arms control, peacekeeping governance, and conflict prevention dimensions of the curriculum. Bangladesh's extraordinary commitment to UN peacekeeping, which has generated substantial goodwill within the UN system, can be leveraged to access these educational resources on favorable terms.

The Commonwealth of Learning, which supports distance education in Commonwealth member states, and the Commonwealth Secretariat's governance programs both offer specific opportunities for Bangladesh to access curriculum development support, faculty training, and institutional development assistance relevant to the democratic governance dimensions of defense education reform. Commonwealth membership provides access to the institutional traditions of several of the strongest democratic defense governance systems in the world, including Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, through channels that reflect shared constitutional traditions rather than requiring Bangladesh to navigate the specific bilateral political complications that direct bilateral engagement sometimes entails.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE CURRICULUM FOR INTELLIGENCE STUDIES AND DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

12.1 Intelligence Education as a Democratic Imperative

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The governance of intelligence services, analyzed in depth in Part Thirteen's legislative reform framework, depends critically on the existence of professionals with the specific knowledge, analytical capabilities, and values required to exercise meaningful oversight over some of the most powerful and most secretive institutions of the democratic state. The parliamentary intelligence committee chair, the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner, the intelligence warrant judge, the defense committee staff specialist in intelligence matters, the civil society researcher studying intelligence governance, and the journalist investigating intelligence abuse all require a level of knowledge about intelligence activities, intelligence law, and the principles of democratic intelligence governance that Bangladesh's current educational system does not produce.

Intelligence studies as an academic discipline, developed primarily in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s and diffused globally since, addresses the full range of questions relevant to the democratic governance of intelligence: what intelligence agencies do, how they do it, what legal and constitutional constraints apply, what oversight mechanisms exist and how effectively they function, and what the comparative experience of intelligence governance in democratic states reveals about best practices and persistent pathologies.

Bangladesh's defense education curriculum must incorporate intelligence studies at multiple levels, from the foundational civic education level where all citizens should understand the constitutional framework governing surveillance and intelligence collection, through the professional level where government officials exercising oversight functions need practical knowledge of intelligence operations and governance mechanisms, to the research level where academic scholars produce the systematic analysis of Bangladesh's specific intelligence governance challenges that informed policy reform requires.

The philosophical foundation for intelligence education in a democracy draws on the tension identified throughout this textbook between the operational requirements of intelligence, which require secrecy, and the accountability requirements of democracy, which require transparency. Resolving this tension, not by eliminating either pole but by developing institutional mechanisms that accommodate both, is the central intellectual and practical challenge of democratic intelligence governance, and it is a challenge that requires educated professionals capable of engaging with its complexity.

12.2 The Specific Curriculum for Intelligence Governance Professionals

The education of professionals who will exercise oversight over Bangladesh's intelligence services, including the parliamentary intelligence committee staff, the Intelligence Services Oversight Commissioner and their staff, the intelligence warrant judges, and the defense ministry officials responsible for intelligence policy, requires a specific curriculum that combines the general foundations of intelligence studies with the specific legal and institutional knowledge relevant to Bangladesh's constitutional framework.

The foundational intelligence studies curriculum should cover the following subjects. Intelligence cycle theory: the basic conceptual framework for understanding how intelligence requirements are set, how collection occurs across the different collection disciplines including

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

human intelligence, signals intelligence, open source intelligence, and imagery intelligence, how collected information is processed and analyzed, and how finished intelligence products are disseminated to policymakers. Intelligence failure theory: the systematic analysis of how and why intelligence agencies fail to anticipate important events, including the cognitive biases, organizational pathologies, and politicization dynamics that produce intelligence failures, drawing on the comparative case study literature from Pearl Harbor through 9/11 through more recent intelligence failures. Intelligence oversight models: the comparative examination of how democratic states have designed and operated intelligence oversight mechanisms, including the specific experience of the United Kingdom's Intelligence and Security Committee, the German Parliamentary Control Panel, the Canadian National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and the United States intelligence committee system. Intelligence ethics: the philosophical and legal frameworks for evaluating the ethics of intelligence activities, including the proportionality and necessity principles that govern intrusive surveillance, the obligations of intelligence agencies in relation to individual rights, and the specific ethical challenges of signals intelligence collection in an age of pervasive digital communications.

The specific Bangladesh legal and constitutional framework curriculum should cover the proposed Intelligence Services Act's specific provisions and the constitutional framework within which they operate, the international human rights law obligations that constrain intelligence activities, the specific legal standards for judicial authorization of intelligence warrants, and the accountability mechanisms that the oversight framework creates.

12.3 Open Source Intelligence in the Digital Age

One of the most significant developments in intelligence practice in the decade of the 2010s and 2020s has been the explosive growth of open source intelligence, the systematic collection and analysis of information from publicly available sources, as a genuine intelligence discipline rather than merely a supplement to classified collection. The aggregation of social media data, satellite imagery now commercially available at resolutions previously reserved for classified systems, financial transaction data, communications metadata, and the vast flows of digital information generated by modern economic and social activity has created an intelligence environment in which remarkably comprehensive pictures of adversary capabilities, intentions, and activities can be constructed from entirely open sources.

The implications for Bangladesh's defense education are threefold. First, OSINT analysis is a skill that can be taught to and practiced by a much wider range of professionals than traditional intelligence analysis, including parliamentary staff, civil society researchers, academic scholars, and journalists, because it does not require access to classified information. Building OSINT capacity across Bangladesh's defense governance ecosystem would dramatically improve the quality of independent analysis available for democratic oversight purposes. Second, OSINT methodology is directly relevant to the emerging technology domains analyzed in Part Eleven: the analysis of adversary drone programs, electronic warfare capabilities, and cyber operations through open source methods has proven remarkably effective in international practice and offers Bangladesh specific opportunities to understand its security environment more comprehensively than its classified collection capabilities alone would permit. Third, the legal framework for OSINT collection, which operates without the warrant requirements applicable to intrusive

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

surveillance, requires specific attention to ensure that the aggregation of publicly available information does not constitute a de facto surveillance capability that circumvents the constitutional protections applicable to direct surveillance.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE STRATEGIC STUDIES RESEARCH AGENDA FOR BANGLADESH

13.1 Priority Research Questions for Bangladesh's Strategic Studies Community

The development of Bangladesh's indigenous strategic studies research capacity, through the institutions proposed in this Part, must be guided by a specific research agenda that reflects the genuine knowledge gaps most consequential for Bangladesh's security outcomes. This chapter identifies the priority research questions that the proposed Bangladesh National Defence University and the Bangladesh Defense Research Institute should address systematically in their foundational years of operation.

The first cluster of priority research questions addresses Bangladesh's strategic position in the evolving Indo-Pacific order. What are the specific strategic interests that the major powers pursue in Bangladesh, and how do these interests conflict and complement each other in the specific context of Bangladesh's geographic position and economic characteristics? What is the optimal institutional framework for Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific engagement, including the specific posture on GSOMIA, ACSA, and other foundational defense agreements? How does the Bay of Bengal's evolving strategic significance affect Bangladesh's security options, and what specific capabilities and diplomatic instruments most effectively protect Bangladesh's maritime interests? How should Bangladesh navigate the competing demands of the US-China competition while maintaining genuine non-aligned status?

The second cluster addresses Bangladesh's bilateral security relationships in depth. What is the structural analysis of the Bangladesh-India relationship, and what specific institutional mechanisms are most likely to produce stable cooperative outcomes rather than the volatile oscillation between warm engagement and acute tension that has characterized the relationship in the 2024 to 2026 period? What are the strategic implications of the Bangladesh-China arms supply relationship, including the specific capabilities and vulnerabilities that Chinese-origin equipment creates? How can Bangladesh maximize the strategic benefits of the Turkey defense partnership while managing the diplomatic complications that Turkey's own strategic positioning creates? What is the long-term trajectory of the Bangladesh-Pakistan rapprochement, and what specific risks and opportunities does it create for Bangladesh's broader security environment?

The third cluster addresses internal security dimensions. What are the specific causal mechanisms producing radicalization in Bangladesh's vulnerable communities, and what do they imply for counter-extremism policy design? What institutional reforms are most likely to produce sustainable improvement in Bangladesh's counter-terrorism performance, given the damage inflicted by the post-July 2024 disruption of established counter-terrorism capabilities? What is the current strategic assessment of the Chittagong Hill Tracts situation, and what specific policy interventions are most likely to produce sustainable reduction in armed group activity?

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

What are the security implications of the Rohingya refugee crisis for Bangladesh's internal stability, and what specific policy interventions can reduce the security risks while meeting Bangladesh's humanitarian obligations?

The fourth cluster addresses defense governance and institutional reform. What are the specific political economy obstacles to democratic defense governance reform in Bangladesh, and what strategies are most likely to build the political coalitions necessary to overcome them? What is the comparative experience of states that have successfully reformed civil-military relations from conditions of military political dominance analogous to Bangladesh's, and what specific sequencing strategies produced the most durable results? How can Bangladesh's military justice system be reformed in ways that produce genuine accountability for human rights violations without generating the institutional resistance that would be fatal to reform? What are the most effective institutional designs for parliamentary defense oversight in a Westminster parliamentary system like Bangladesh's?

The fifth cluster addresses the economic dimensions of defense. What are the specific fiscal implications of Bangladesh's current defense modernization commitments, and how do they interact with Bangladesh's overall fiscal framework and development investment requirements? What are the comparative economics of Bangladesh's major procurement options, including genuine lifecycle cost analysis for the fighter aircraft, submarine, and air defense system decisions currently under consideration? What are the optimal institutional design features for Bangladesh's Defense Economic Zone, and what comparative evidence supports the specific structural choices? What is the realistic economic potential for Bangladesh's defense exports, and what institutional investments would most effectively develop that potential?

13.2 The Methodology of Security Studies Research for Bangladesh

The specific methodological challenges of security studies research in Bangladesh's context deserve systematic attention, because the methodological choices that researchers make determine both the questions they can answer and the quality of the answers they produce. Security studies research in Bangladesh faces specific methodological obstacles that researchers must address rather than ignore.

The classification problem is the most fundamental: the most important information for understanding Bangladesh's security environment is classified, and the researchers best positioned to know and analyze it are either prohibited from disclosing it or structurally disincentivized from doing so by institutional loyalty and career interests. The response to this problem is not to pretend that open source analysis can substitute entirely for classified analysis, but to develop research methodologies that extract maximum analytic value from available open sources while acknowledging the limitations of open source research where they are significant.

The access problem is related but distinct: even information that is formally available, including parliamentary proceedings, court documents, audit reports, and governmental statements, is often practically difficult to access in Bangladesh because of inadequate archival practices, limited digital availability, and the practical obstacles that researchers from outside the governmental establishment face in obtaining documents. Systematic investment in the digitization and

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

accessibility of the public record on defense matters is both a research infrastructure investment and a transparency improvement that serves democratic accountability.

The elite interview problem affects all research on politically sensitive topics but is particularly acute in security studies: the individuals with the most relevant knowledge are often unwilling to speak on the record for fear of professional or personal retaliation. Developing the methodologies of elite interviewing, including the ethics of confidentiality protection, the analytical techniques for working with imperfect and self-interested testimony, and the institutional frameworks for protecting researchers and their sources, is an essential component of the methodological training that Bangladesh's defense studies graduate programs must provide.

The comparative methodology problem reflects the specific challenge of applying lessons from other countries to Bangladesh's specific context. The comparative method, which is fundamental to security studies research because controlled experimentation is impossible, requires both systematic attention to the cases being compared and careful qualification of conclusions to account for the contextual differences that limit generalizability. Developing the comparative research skills that allow Bangladesh's researchers to extract genuine lessons from the experiences of South Korea, Finland, Indonesia, and other comparative cases without uncritically importing their specific solutions requires the kind of methodological self-consciousness that good doctoral training cultivates.

13.3 International Research Collaboration and Bangladesh's Strategic Studies Contribution

Bangladesh's strategic studies community has a specific contribution to make to the international security studies discipline that goes beyond the obvious interest of studying Bangladesh's security for its own sake. The specific features of Bangladesh's strategic position, its geographic location at the intersection of South Asian and Southeast Asian security dynamics, its extraordinary peacekeeping commitment, its experience with democratic transition from military rule, its management of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, and its navigation of great power competition from a position of small state strategic autonomy, make Bangladesh a case of significant theoretical interest for the international security studies community.

Bangladesh's researchers are best positioned to make this contribution because they have access to the local knowledge, the archival sources, the elite networks, and the cultural understanding that generates the kind of contextually rich, analytically rigorous scholarship that advances the international discipline. International scholars studying Bangladesh face significant limitations of contextual knowledge and access that domestic scholars do not share. But making this contribution requires that Bangladesh's researchers engage with the international disciplinary community through publication in international peer-reviewed journals, participation in international conferences, collaboration with international research partners, and engagement with the theoretical debates that the international community pursues.

The establishment of the proposed Bangladesh National Defence University and the Bangladesh Defense Research Institute would provide the institutional framework for this international

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

engagement: the research support, the publication infrastructure, the network maintenance activities, and the research collaboration management that sustained international scholarly engagement requires. Without this institutional framework, individual Bangladeshi scholars may make valuable contributions to the international discipline, but those contributions will remain individual achievements rather than elements of a sustained institutional contribution to the global security studies knowledge base.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CONTROVERSIES IN DEFENSE EDUCATION: CONTESTED QUESTIONS AND NECESSARY DEBATES

14.1 The Debate About Military Autonomy and Civilian Interference in Professional Education

One of the most persistent controversies in the design of professional military education is the tension between the military establishment's claim to autonomy over the professional development of its officers and the democratic state's claim to shape the values and knowledge that its military professionals acquire. This tension is not a false one: it reflects a genuine conflict between two legitimate interests that must be negotiated rather than resolved by simply asserting the priority of either.

The military's case for professional autonomy in education draws on the same logic as the case for professional autonomy in other demanding occupations: the professional community is better placed than the lay public to determine what knowledge and values its practitioners require for competent professional performance. Civilian politicians and academic scholars without operational military experience may lack the understanding of combat's specific demands, the fog of war, the requirements of discipline and command, the physical and psychological dimensions of military service that a genuinely effective professional military education must address. Educational interventions by civilians who do not understand these operational realities may produce officers who are civically educated but operationally incompetent, which is not a trade-off that serves national security.

The democratic state's case for oversight of professional military education draws on the principle of civilian supremacy and the specific historical record that makes the case empirically. Military institutions that develop their own educational programs without meaningful civilian oversight consistently produce graduates who are professionally competent by military standards but civically deficient by democratic standards, officers who understand how to fight but not how to serve, who understand chain of command but not constitutional accountability, who understand military necessity but not democratic legitimacy. Bangladesh's own history of military political intervention is in part a story of this educational failure: the armed forces' institutional culture of claiming the right to override democratic decisions in the name of national interest reflects an educational tradition that has not adequately formed the democratic values and constitutional commitments that genuine civil-military relations require.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The resolution proposed in this chapter, the balanced institutional architecture of the BNDU with its combination of military professional governance and genuine academic independence, attempts to honor both claims rather than dismissing either. Military professional requirements for operational competence are met through the Division of Military Studies with its military faculty and practical orientation. Democratic governance requirements for civic education and constitutional formation are met through the mandatory curriculum elements in constitutional law, civil-military relations, and international humanitarian law, protected by the academic freedom provisions that prevent the military establishment from editing out the content it finds uncomfortable.

14.2 The Religious Identity Controversy in Defense Education

One of the most politically charged controversies in Bangladesh's educational environment generally, and in defense education specifically, is the role of Islamic identity and Islamic values in the curriculum and institutional culture. The search results from this Part's research reveal the genuine tension in Bangladesh's educational system between secular and religious orientations, with the interim government's education decisions generating intense controversy about the appropriate balance.

For defense education specifically, this controversy has several dimensions. The first is the question of how Islamic jurisprudential frameworks for the use of force, analyzed in Part One of this textbook, should be integrated into the ethics and law of armed conflict curriculum. The mainstream international humanitarian law tradition, as embodied in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, is a product of European legal and philosophical tradition, and its translation into the specific cultural and religious context of Bangladesh's predominantly Muslim military requires more than mere translation into Bengali: it requires genuine engagement with the Islamic jurisprudential tradition on warfare, governance, and accountability that provides the moral vocabulary most Bangladeshi military personnel actually use in their ethical reasoning.

This engagement is not merely instrumentally valuable for the effective communication of IHL principles; it is substantively important for the development of the indigenous security studies tradition that Bangladesh requires. A defense ethics curriculum that presents IHL in exclusively Western philosophical terms, as if the Islamic tradition had nothing to say about the ethics of warfare, justice in conflict, and the accountability of rulers for the exercise of coercive power, will be less effective in forming the values of Bangladesh's predominantly Muslim military professionals than one that engages seriously with both traditions and demonstrates their fundamental convergence on the principles that matter most for democratic security governance.

The second dimension is the question of how to address the radicalization challenge within the defense education environment, where some fraction of military personnel, primarily from the enlisted ranks, may be susceptible to extremist recruitment. The defense education system's engagement with this challenge requires not merely counter-messaging but the development of a substantive alternative framework for Islamic political engagement that addresses the genuine grievances and aspirations that extremist narratives exploit. This engagement requires scholars with deep knowledge of Islamic theology and jurisprudence working alongside security

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

specialists, an interdisciplinary collaboration that Bangladesh's educational institutions are not currently structured to support.

The third dimension is the institutional culture dimension: how should defense education institutions manage the expression of religious identity in their institutional culture, from prayer arrangements through dietary provisions through the observance of religious holidays? This question, which seems mundane compared to the deeper jurisprudential questions, is actually quite consequential for the institutional culture of democratic defense governance. An institutional culture that treats religious observance as a source of potential security concern, as the suspicion of Islamist radicalization sometimes generates, fails the fundamental civic principle that Bangladesh's Constitution enshrines: that there is no contradiction between Islamic identity and Bangladeshi citizenship. An institutional culture that explicitly acknowledges and accommodates religious identity within the democratic constitutional framework sends a message about civil-military relations and constitutional citizenship that no amount of formal curriculum instruction can replicate.

14.3 The Colonial Curriculum Controversy

A third significant controversy in the design of Bangladesh's defense education curriculum is the degree to which the existing curriculum, both in its military professional and its academic dimensions, reflects colonial intellectual legacies that are inadequate for or actively distort the analysis of Bangladesh's specific security situation. This controversy draws on the post-colonial and decolonial theoretical tradition analyzed in Parts One and Seven of this textbook, and it has specific practical implications for curriculum design.

The colonial curriculum problem in security studies manifests primarily through the dominance of Western theoretical frameworks, Western case studies, and Western institutional models in courses that claim to teach universal principles of strategic theory, civil-military relations, and defense governance. When Bangladesh's officers study civil-military relations through the lens of Huntington's Soldier and the State, they are studying a theoretical framework developed in the American Cold War context that, as critics from Samuel Finer through Rebecca Schiff through Zoltan Barany have argued, inadequately captures the dynamics of civil-military relations in post-colonial states with histories of praetorian politics analogous to Bangladesh's. When they study strategic theory through Clausewitz and Mahan, they are engaging with thinkers whose conceptual frameworks were developed in the European state system and may not translate without significant modification to Bangladesh's specific strategic context. When they study democratic governance through American and European institutional models, they are examining arrangements developed in political and constitutional cultures quite different from Bangladesh's own.

The response to the colonial curriculum problem is not to abandon Western theoretical frameworks, which are genuinely valuable analytical tools even when applied to non-Western contexts, but to supplement them systematically with frameworks developed from non-Western intellectual traditions and to require critical engagement with the assumptions embedded in any theoretical framework rather than treating any single tradition as universal. The curriculum should require students to engage with Kautilya's Arthashastra as seriously as with Clausewitz's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

On War, with Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah as seriously as with Mahan's Influence of Sea Power, and with the post-colonial security theory of Fanon, Said, and the subaltern studies tradition as seriously as with the mainstream liberal institutionalist framework.

Bangladesh's own liberation war experience offers perhaps the richest indigenous intellectual resource for security studies education, yet it has been inadequately integrated into the formal curriculum. The strategic innovation of the Liberation War, the combination of irregular warfare, popular mobilization, diplomatic engagement, and ultimately conventional military operations that produced Bangladesh's independence against enormous odds, is a case study in small state strategic success that has direct implications for Bangladesh's contemporary security challenges. The intellectual heritage of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's political mobilization, Ziaur Rahman's military doctrine, and the Mukti Bahini's strategic adaptation should be subjects of serious scholarly analysis in Bangladesh's defense education curriculum, not merely patriotic commemoration.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: DEFENSE EDUCATION AND THE LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

15.1 Strategic Culture: Formation, Function, and Reform

Strategic culture, defined by scholars including Alastair Iain Johnston, Ken Booth, and Colin Gray as the persistent set of assumptions, values, beliefs, and behaviors that a strategic community brings to questions of military power and the use of force, provides the theoretical framework for understanding both why defense education matters and what its long-term impact on a state's strategic behavior can be.

The concept of strategic culture emerged from the recognition that purely materialist explanations of strategic behavior, those focused on military capabilities, geographic position, and economic resources, leave unexplained a significant residual variation in how states respond to similar strategic situations. States with roughly similar capabilities and facing roughly similar threats often make very different strategic choices, and these differences are systematically connected to historical experiences, institutional patterns, and cultural traditions that materially similar states do not share. France and Germany share a border, share broadly similar economic capacities, have faced similar security challenges in the post-war period, and yet have developed strikingly different strategic cultures: France with its tradition of nuclear independence, its willingness to conduct unilateral military interventions, and its ambivalence toward NATO integration; Germany with its constitutional constraints on overseas military deployment, its deep multilateral commitment, and its persistent historical consciousness of the consequences of military adventurism.

For Bangladesh, the concept of strategic culture is particularly important because of the specific ways in which the Liberation War experience, the subsequent decades of military political intervention, the peacekeeping commitment, and the democratic transition experiences have shaped the assumptions and values that Bangladesh's defense community brings to strategic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

questions. Understanding Bangladesh's strategic culture, its strengths and its pathologies, is a precondition for designing the educational interventions that can reinforce the strengths and address the pathologies.

The dominant elements of Bangladesh's strategic culture, as observable in the patterns of strategic behavior analyzed throughout this textbook, include the following. A profound sensitivity to sovereignty threats, rooted in the Liberation War experience, that makes Bangladesh deeply suspicious of any external actor's strategic intentions regardless of stated benevolence. A peacekeeping internationalism, rooted in both the gratitude for international support in 1971 and the economic and professional benefits of peacekeeping engagement, that has made multilateral security cooperation a consistent element of Bangladeshi strategic identity. A strategic opportunism in arms procurement and alliance management that seeks to maximize options by maintaining relationships with multiple competing powers, reflecting the "friendship with all, malice toward none" philosophy. And a persistent praetorian tradition, in which the military sees itself as the ultimate guarantor of national stability and the appropriate final arbiter of political legitimacy, that has been gradually weakened but not eliminated by the democratic transitions of 1991 and 2024.

Defense education's relationship to strategic culture is one of formation and gradual reform. Educational programs cannot directly change strategic culture, which is formed by historical experience, institutional practice, and social transmission across generations. But they can, over time, reinforce the elements of Bangladesh's strategic culture that serve democratic governance and national security, and gradually weaken the elements that undermine both. The peacekeeping internationalism can be deepened and given greater institutional grounding through education that connects it to the broader principles of democratic multilateralism that Bangladesh's Constitution and international commitments enshrine. The sovereignty sensitivity can be channeled toward constructive diplomatic engagement rather than defensive insularity through education that develops sophisticated analytical frameworks for managing the interdependence that modern security requires. The praetorian tradition can be challenged and gradually reduced through sustained education in the constitutional principles of civilian supremacy and the professional ethics of military service in a democratic republic.

15.2 The Generational Dimension of Strategic Culture Change

Strategic culture change is inherently a generational project. The assumptions, values, and behaviors that constitute strategic culture are formed through socialization processes that begin in childhood and are reinforced through career-long professional experience. A single educational program, however well-designed, cannot overcome the weight of institutional experience and professional socialization that shapes an officer's strategic behavior. What educational programs can do is create the conceptual vocabulary, the analytical frameworks, and the explicit value commitments that provide the intellectual resources for cultural change when the political and institutional conditions for change are present.

The generational perspective suggests that the most consequential investments in defense education are those that affect the beginning of military careers, when institutional culture is most malleable and when the values formed will persist through decades of subsequent

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

professional experience. The BMA curriculum reform proposed in Chapter Ten is therefore more important for Bangladesh's long-term strategic culture than the NDC curriculum reform, even though the immediate policy impact of the NDC reform may be more visible, because the values formed at the start of a military career are more durable than those added at the senior officer stage.

This generational perspective also suggests the importance of civilian defense education as a long-term investment. The civilian officials, parliamentarians, judges, prosecutors, journalists, and civil society leaders who will exercise democratic oversight of defense in 2040 and 2050 are being educated now, or will be educated in the next decade, in institutions whose current curricula do not prepare them for these roles. The investment in civilian defense education described in this Part is therefore not an immediate return investment but a generational one: the payoff comes in a decade or two, when the professionals formed by these educational programs reach positions of responsibility in the defense governance architecture that Bangladesh's reform agenda is building.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE INTEGRATED VISION FOR BANGLADESH'S DEFENSE STUDIES ECOSYSTEM IN 2036

16.1 The Target Institutional Architecture

The integrated vision for Bangladesh's defense studies ecosystem by 2036, achievable if the institutional investments described in this Part are made with sustained commitment over a decade, is the following. A Bangladesh National Defence University, established and operating with genuine academic standards, offering graduate programs to both military and civilian students, conducting peer-reviewed research published in international journals alongside policy-relevant analysis, and recognized by the international security studies community as a genuine intellectual partner. A Bangladesh Defense Research Institute, operating with institutional independence and adequate funding, producing the specific research on Bangladesh's security environment, civil-military relations, defense economics, and governance that Bangladesh's policy community currently lacks. A defense journalism community with technically qualified reporters covering defense issues with genuine investigative competence and institutional protection. A civil society defense governance community with the technical expertise, the legal capacity, and the public communication skills to exercise the monitoring, advocacy, and accountability functions that democratic defense governance requires. A parliamentary defense research service with security-cleared staff providing genuine expert support to the parliamentary defense committee's oversight function. A legal community with genuine expertise in military law, intelligence law, and international humanitarian law capable of staffing the institutional reforms proposed in Part Thirteen.

This target architecture is not aspirational: it describes what the comparative evidence from South Korea, Finland, Australia, and other democratic states demonstrates is achievable within a decade when political will is sustained, institutional investment is made, and the enabling legislative and regulatory environment is established. The obstacles to achieving it are primarily

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

political, including the military establishment's resistance to civilian oversight and democratic accountability, rather than financial or technical, including the relatively modest costs of educational investment compared to the enormous sums committed to military hardware procurement.

16.2 The Legislative Requirements for Defense Education Reform

The defense education reform agenda proposed in this Part requires specific legislative support that the broader National Defense Act framework proposed in Part Thirteen should address. The most important legislative provisions for defense education include the following.

The statutory establishment of the Bangladesh National Defence University, with its governance structure, academic freedom protections, and funding framework specified in legislation rather than left to executive discretion. Statutory establishment provides the institutional stability and the independence from governmental interference that genuine academic quality requires. The founding legislation should specify the university's mandate, its governance architecture, the principle of academic freedom, the requirement for regular independent academic quality assessment, and the funding formula that ensures adequate resources for research as well as teaching.

The statutory establishment of the Bangladesh Defense Research Institute, with its independence protections, funding framework, publication obligations, and relationship to the parliamentary defense committee specified in legislation. The independence of the research institute from governmental interference is its most valuable characteristic, and only legislative protection can make that independence durable against the inevitable pressures from governments whose policies the institute may criticize.

The statutory requirement for security clearances for parliamentary defense committee members and staff, the process for granting and maintaining such clearances, and the criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure of classified information accessed through the parliamentary clearance system. This legislative framework, analyzed in Part Thirteen, is essential to enabling the intelligence committee oversight model that democratic defense governance requires.

The statutory framework for the Parliamentary Research Service's defense and security function, including the staffing requirements, the security clearance provisions, the funding guarantees, and the institutional independence from partisan control that effective parliamentary research requires. The current ad hoc arrangements, in which parliamentary research functions are organized without statutory mandate, leave the function perpetually vulnerable to resource reduction and political direction.

16.3 The Philosophical Synthesis: Education as Sovereignty

Part Fifteen concludes where it began, with the philosophical claim that education is not a luxury of democratic defense governance but a foundational investment in the sovereignty that Bangladesh's Constitution asserts and its people's liberation struggle established.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The argument can now be stated in its full philosophical scope. Sovereignty, in the classical tradition from Bodin through Hobbes through the contemporary international law framework, refers to the supreme authority of a political community over itself. In the democratic tradition, this sovereignty belongs to the people, who exercise it through the institutions they create, the laws they enact, and the accountability mechanisms they establish. A democracy's security institutions, including its armed forces, intelligence agencies, and police, are agents of this popular sovereignty, authorized to use coercive power in the people's name and accountable to the people for how they use it.

But popular sovereignty in the defense domain is meaningless if the people lack the knowledge, the institutions, and the analytical capacities to exercise genuine oversight of the security forces acting in their name. A legislature that does not understand defense questions, that lacks access to classified information, and that has no professional support for scrutiny of defense expenditure is nominally sovereign but actually dependent on the executive and the military for everything it knows about defense. A civil society without the knowledge to engage credibly with defense issues, without the legal tools to challenge security force abuses, and without the media infrastructure to investigate and publicize defense governance failures is nominally free but actually excluded from the defense domain. An academic community without the institutional support, the research resources, and the academic freedom to engage critically with defense policy is nominally independent but actually unable to fulfill the intellectual function that democracy requires.

The defense education reform agenda proposed in this Part is therefore ultimately an argument about sovereignty: about creating the intellectual and institutional conditions under which Bangladesh's people can genuinely exercise the democratic sovereignty over defense that their Constitution promises. The National Defence University, the Defense Research Institute, the parliamentary research service, the defense journalism community, the civil society advocacy organizations, the reformed legal education, the curriculum reforms in military professional education: all of these are institutional investments in the genuine exercise of democratic sovereignty. All of them contribute to the project of making Bangladesh's defense policy what the founding generation of 1971 intended it to be: a policy of and for the people, transparently grounded in their constitutional values, accountable to their democratic representatives, and oriented toward the security of the entire national community rather than the interests of any faction, party, or institution that happens to control the levers of power.

This is the vision that the liberation of 1971 demanded and that every subsequent democratic struggle in Bangladesh has sought to realize. Part Fifteen has tried to show, with the specificity and the intellectual seriousness that the task requires, what building the educational foundation for that vision means in institutional and programmatic terms. Part Sixteen will provide the philosophical synthesis of the entire sixteen-part project: the comprehensive statement of the principles, values, and strategic vision that should animate Bangladesh's defense policy in the twenty-first century, and the final integrated assessment of the relationship between all the specific proposals developed across this textbook and the broader democratic aspiration that gives them their ultimate justification.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART FIFTEEN

Theory of Defense Education and Professional Military Education

Builder, Carl. The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Cohen, Eliot. Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime. New York: Free Press, 2002.

Feaver, Peter and Richard Kohn, editors. Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001.

Huntington, Samuel. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Janowitz, Morris. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Krepinevich, Andrew. The Army and Vietnam. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Murray, Williamson and Barry Watts. Military Innovation in the Interwar Period. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Strategic Culture Theory

Booth, Ken. Strategy and Ethnocentrism. London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Gray, Colin. Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back. Review of International Studies, 1999.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Kier, Elizabeth. Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Snyder, Jack. The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1977.

Comparative Defense Education Institutions

Australia. Australian Defence College. Annual Report 2024-25. Canberra: ADC, 2025.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Finland. National Defence University. Research and Teaching Plan 2023-2028. Helsinki: NDU Finland, 2023.

Korea. Korea National Defense University. Catalogue of Programs. Seoul: KNDU, 2024.

Institute for National Security Studies. Research Overview 2025. Tel Aviv: INSS, 2025.

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. Annual Report 2024-25. New Delhi: MP-IDSA, 2025.

Bangladesh Defense Education

Bangladesh Army. Defence Services Command and Staff College. Official website. dscsc.mil.bd, 2026.

Bangladesh Army. Bangladesh Military Academy. Official website. bma.army.mil.bd, 2026.

NESA Center for Strategic Studies. Professional Military Education Program for the Bangladesh National Defense College. Washington: NESA, September 2025.

International Humanitarian Law Education

International Committee of the Red Cross. Integrating the Law. Geneva: ICRC, 2010.

International Committee of the Red Cross. Teaching IHL: A Guide. Geneva: ICRC, 2019.

International Committee of the Red Cross. International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts. Geneva: ICRC, 2023.

Melzer, Nils. International Humanitarian Law: A Comprehensive Introduction. Geneva: ICRC, 2019.

Intelligence Studies and Education

Lowenthal, Mark. Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy. Ninth edition. Washington: CQ Press, 2025.

Phythian, Mark and Stefanie Bredenkamp, editors. The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Born, Hans, Loch Johnson, and Ian Leigh, editors. Who's Watching the Spies? Establishing Intelligence Service Accountability. Washington: Potomac Books, 2005.

Gill, Peter and Mark Phythian. Intelligence in an Insecure World. Third edition. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Civil Society and Democratic Defense Governance

Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices. Geneva: DCAF, 2019.

Born, Hans and Heiner Hanggi. The Double Democratic Deficit: Parliamentary Accountability and the Use of Force Under International Auspices. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Transparency International Defense and Security. Government Defence Integrity Index: Guidance and Standards. London: TI-DS, 2020.

Bangladesh Specific Sources

Dipu, Ahmad M. Rethinking Bangladesh's National Defense Policy in the Wake of the Students-People's Uprising. SSRN Working Paper 5584990, November 2025.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. Security Sector Reform Conference Report. Dhaka: BIPSS, December 2025.

The Diplomat. Bangladesh Interim Government Bows to Islamists' Pressure. November 2025.

The Business Standard. DCs Propose Military Training for Bangladeshi Youths. February 2025.

NDC E-Journal. Conceptualising Information Warfare. National Defence College Bangladesh, June 2025.

End of Part Fifteen

Part Sixteen will provide the philosophical synthesis of the entire sixteen-part textbook: a comprehensive statement of the principles, values, and strategic vision that should animate Bangladesh's defense policy in the twenty-first century. It will integrate the foundational philosophical analysis of Part One with the legislative architecture of Part Thirteen, the operational strategy of Part Fourteen, the educational framework of Part Fifteen, and all of the analytical dimensions developed across the preceding fifteen parts. It will offer a final assessment of the distance between Bangladesh's current reality and the democratic defense governance that its Constitution promises, and the specific benchmarks against which progress toward that vision should be measured over the decade from 2026 to 2036. Part Sixteen will also address the enduring questions that no defense policy framework can finally resolve, the questions about the relationship between force and justice, security and liberty, sovereign interests and human dignity, that are the permanent companions of serious thinking about defense in a constitutional democracy.

Part Sixteen: The Philosophical Synthesis, Grand Strategy, Democratic Covenants, and the Complete Architecture of Bangladesh's Defense Future

First Edition, 2026

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Prepared for Advanced Academic, Legislative, Policy Research, and Strategic Studies Audiences

---

FOREWORD TO PART SIXTEEN

Part Sixteen arrives at the summit of an intellectual journey that began with Kautilya's Arthashastra and Thucydides's Melian Dialogue, traveled through the constitutional struggles of a nation born in blood and sacrifice in 1971, descended into the mechanisms of parliamentary oversight and budget accountability, crossed the operational terrain of hybrid warfare and gray zone competition, climbed through the architecture of defense education reform, and now reaches the point where all of those threads must be drawn together into a coherent philosophical and strategic synthesis.

This final part does not offer a conclusion in the sense of a closed argument. Defense policy, as every part of this textbook has insisted, is not a problem that gets solved and set aside. It is a permanent endeavor of democratic governance, a continuous negotiation between the competing claims of security and liberty, sovereign interest and human dignity, institutional memory and political renewal, strategic realism and constitutional idealism. What this part offers instead is a synthesis: a comprehensive statement of the principles that should govern Bangladesh's approach to defense in the twenty-first century, a frank assessment of the distance between current reality and those principles, a set of specific and measurable benchmarks for closing that distance, and several complete draft policy frameworks that translate philosophical principle into legislative and operational reality.

The moment at which this synthesis is written matters enormously. Bangladesh in April 2026 is a nation in genuine transition. The July Revolution of 2024 ended fifteen years of Awami League governance and opened a period of political reconstruction whose outcome remains genuinely uncertain. The elections of February 2026 have now returned the Bangladesh Nationalist Party to formal power under Tariq Rehman's leadership, creating the first elected government since the revolution and opening the possibility of a more stable institutional framework for the democratic defense governance this textbook has argued for throughout. At the same time, the strategic environment in which Bangladesh must operate is more complex and more dangerous than at any point since 1971. The India relationship, once described as a "golden chapter," has passed through a period of serious deterioration and is only now beginning the careful work of reconstruction under new political auspices on both sides. The Myanmar border remains a theater of chronic instability, with the Arakan Army consolidating its control of Rakhine State and the Naf River continuing to carry across it both refugees and the armed non-state actors who exploit their misery. China remains the dominant arms supplier and a central development financier but has accumulated a growing deficit of trust through the supply of equipment that has failed catastrophically, including the June 2025 crash of a Chinese-made F-7BGI into a Dhaka school that killed twenty people. Turkey has emerged as a genuine alternative strategic partner of growing importance. The United States, after the Tiger Shark exercises of August 2025, signals a renewed interest in Bangladesh's strategic alignment that carries both opportunity and the risk of drawing Dhaka into great power competition on terms not of its own choosing. Pakistan, dormant as a strategic partner for fifty years, has dramatically re-entered the picture through the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

ISI intelligence exchange of February 2025 and the naval exercise Aman-25, reconstructing a relationship that India watches with deep suspicion and that raises profound questions about Bangladesh's national interest as it has been historically understood.

Into this environment, this part offers not prescriptions handed down from theoretical heights but principles derived from the accumulated analysis of fifteen previous parts, grounded in the specific realities of Bangladesh's constitutional heritage, its strategic geography, its democratic aspirations, and its material capabilities. The reader who has accompanied this textbook through its full journey will find here not new arguments but the full flowering of arguments made throughout. The reader who enters at this point will find a comprehensive statement of where Bangladesh's defense policy must go, why it must go there, and how the going might be managed.

No em dash punctuation will interrupt the flow of the prose. The argument moves from philosophical foundations through geopolitical assessment through legislative architecture through operational doctrine through diplomatic framework through draft policy instruments to a final reckoning with the permanent questions that animated this entire enterprise from its first page.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PHILOSOPHICAL SYNTHESIS - SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY, AND THE DEMOCRATIC COVENANT

1.1 Returning to First Principles

When Part One of this textbook asked what it means to defend, the question was posed as the necessary beginning of all subsequent analysis. Now, having traversed fifteen parts of that analysis, the question must be asked again, not because the answer was inadequate then, but because the full weight of accumulated argument gives it a richer and more demanding answer now.

Defense, in its deepest philosophical sense, is the organized capacity of a political community to protect the conditions of its own existence. This definition has three components, each of which has been complicated and enriched by everything this textbook has examined. The organized capacity component points to institutions: the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the border security apparatus, the civil defense structures, and the diplomatic machinery through which threats are anticipated and managed. The protection component points to purpose: what is being protected, and for whom, and against what, and at what cost to which values. The conditions of existence component points to something deeper than mere territorial survival: the preservation of the political, legal, social, and cultural fabric that makes the community worth defending in the first place.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh's Constitution makes this third component explicit in a way that is both its greatest strength and, as this textbook has documented throughout, the source of its greatest tensions. Article 7 declares that all powers in the Republic belong to the people. Article 8 establishes nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism as the fundamental principles of state policy. Article 21 imposes on every citizen the duty to defend Bangladesh. The entire constitutional framework situates defense not as an autonomous sphere governed by military professionals but as a dimension of democratic governance, accountable to the people, constrained by their fundamental rights, and oriented toward their collective wellbeing.

The philosophical tension that has run through every chapter of this textbook is between this constitutional vision and the actual practice of defense governance in Bangladesh since 1971. The armed forces have repeatedly intervened directly in politics, suspending constitutional governance in 1975, in 1982, and again effectively during the emergency period of 2007 to 2008. Even during nominally civilian periods, the military has operated with a degree of institutional autonomy that has insulated it from the democratic accountability the Constitution requires. The defense budget has been voted by Parliament without meaningful scrutiny. Procurement decisions have been made through executive processes opaque to legislative or public oversight. Intelligence operations have operated under legal frameworks that provide minimal protection for civil liberties. The gap between constitutional promise and institutional reality has been, in the language of this textbook's consistent critique, the defining failure of Bangladesh's defense governance history.

What the philosophical synthesis now offered here insists upon is that closing this gap is not merely a matter of good governance hygiene. It is a fundamental requirement of Bangladesh's national security itself. The argument proceeds through four philosophical claims.

1.2 The First Claim: Democratic Legitimacy Is a Strategic Asset

The first philosophical claim is that democratic legitimacy, far from being a constraint on effective defense policy, is among the most important strategic assets a state can possess. This claim requires careful elaboration because it runs against a persistent assumption in defense policy circles, an assumption that democratic processes slow decisions, constrain operations, expose classified information, and generally handicap military effectiveness compared to authoritarian states that can simply direct their military forces without political friction.

This assumption misreads both the theory and the evidence. The theory, developed most rigorously in Immanuel Kant's analysis of perpetual peace and in the subsequent democratic peace literature pioneered by Michael Doyle and subsequently elaborated by Bruce Russett and John Oneal, holds that democracies relate differently to each other than authoritarian states do, that their shared institutional norms, their accountability to publics that bear the costs of war, and their transparency about intentions reduce the misperception and the security dilemmas that produce conflicts between states. At the international level, Bangladesh's democratic standing gives it a particular kind of diplomatic credibility: it can engage with democratic partners in Europe, Japan, Australia, and the United States on terms that authoritarian states cannot, because the shared language of rights, accountability, and rule of law creates a foundation of trust that is itself strategically valuable.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

But the domestic dimension of the argument is equally important. A defense policy that genuinely reflects democratic deliberation and public consent is more durable, more sustainable, and ultimately more effective than one imposed by executive fiat or military preference. The citizens whose taxes fund the defense establishment, whose children serve in the armed forces, and whose territory is being defended have both the right and the practical importance of genuine stakeholders. When defense policy is opaque, when procurement decisions are made without scrutiny, when the military is insulated from civilian oversight, the result is not more effective defense but less: procurement corruption that wastes resources, strategic decisions disconnected from national political realities, and military institutions that optimize for their own interests rather than the national security they nominally serve.

The evidence from Bangladesh's own history is instructive here. The periods of military governance and military-dominated governance, whatever their short-term political stability, did not produce better strategic outcomes. The 1975 coup and its aftermath shattered the nascent institutional framework of the new state and produced decades of political instability that damaged Bangladesh's international standing and its capacity to pursue coherent long-term strategic interests. The 2007 to 2008 emergency, while ostensibly reformist in intent, demonstrated again that military intervention in politics produces a legitimacy deficit that outlasts the intervention itself and poisons the civil-military relationship for years afterward.

The philosophical claim, therefore, is not merely normative: democratic defense governance is constitutionally required. It is also strategically prudent: democratic legitimacy generates the domestic political sustainability and the international diplomatic credibility that effective defense policy requires over the long term.

1.3 The Second Claim: Security and Liberty Are Complements, Not Rivals

The second philosophical claim challenges perhaps the most pervasive false dichotomy in defense policy discourse: the claim that security and liberty are fundamentally in tension, that more of one necessarily means less of the other, and that therefore a security-conscious state must accept restrictions on individual rights as the necessary price of collective protection.

This dichotomy has been used throughout Bangladesh's history to justify emergency powers, preventive detention, surveillance of political opponents, and the suppression of dissent under the rubric of national security. The Suppression of Violence Against the State Act, the Special Powers Act of 1974, the Digital Security Act of its various iterations, and the intelligence laws examined throughout this textbook have all been deployed, to varying degrees, in ways that used security rhetoric to justify political repression.

The philosophical critique of this pattern draws on John Locke's foundational insight that legitimate government exists to protect rights, not to override them, combined with the contemporary jurisprudence of proportionality that has been developed by constitutional courts across democratic states. The European Court of Human Rights, the Supreme Court of India, the Constitutional Court of South Korea, and the courts of every established democracy have grappled with the balance between security imperatives and individual rights, and the accumulated jurisprudence of these courts converges on a principle that is directly applicable to

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Bangladesh: security restrictions on individual rights are legitimate only when they are prescribed by law, directed at a legitimate security objective, and proportionate to that objective in both their scope and their duration.

The Security and Liberty Complementarity thesis, as it may be called, goes further than this proportionality requirement. It argues that systematic violations of individual liberty actually undermine national security in the long run because they destroy the social trust, the political legitimacy, and the collaborative civic capacity that effective defense requires. A state apparatus that surveils its own citizens indiscriminately, that detains dissidents without trial, that criminalizes peaceful political opposition in the name of security, is building a social environment of mistrust and resentment that makes it harder, not easier, to mobilize the social solidarity that genuine national emergencies require.

Bangladesh's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a stark illustration. In a state where institutional trust had been eroded by years of governance failures, where the Digital Security Act had criminalized independent journalism, and where civil society organizations operated under continuous governmental pressure, the state's capacity to mobilize voluntary public cooperation with public health measures was significantly impaired compared to democracies with stronger institutional trust. The security and governance implications of institutional trust deficits extend directly to defense: a population that distrusts its government's honesty about threats and capabilities is less likely to support the defense investments and operational decisions that genuine security requires.

The positive formulation of this claim is therefore: security institutions that operate within constitutional constraints, under effective oversight, with transparent accountability, and with genuine respect for the rights of the citizens they serve, are more effective security institutions than their authoritarian counterparts, because they generate the civic trust and political legitimacy that are themselves components of national resilience. This philosophical claim has direct institutional implications explored throughout this textbook and returned to in the legislative architecture sections of this final part.

1.4 The Third Claim: Strategic Culture Must Be Reconstructed

The third philosophical claim engages the concept of strategic culture, which the theorists Jack Snyder and Alastair Iain Johnston have defined as the distinctive, long-standing patterns of belief, attitude, and behavior with respect to the use of force that characterize a state's security community. Strategic culture is not simply policy: it is the deeper set of assumptions, historical memories, professional norms, and institutional habits that shape the context within which policy is made.

Bangladesh's strategic culture, as this textbook has analyzed throughout its sixteen parts, carries several legacies that are both assets and liabilities. The liberation struggle of 1971 bequeathed a powerful narrative of popular resistance, of armed struggle in defense of democratic and cultural identity, and of the capacity of a determined people to overcome overwhelming military force when mobilized around a legitimate cause. These are genuine strategic assets: they establish the existential justification for Bangladesh's armed forces, they provide the moral foundation for the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

constitutional principle that defense is a civic duty rather than merely a professional function, and they connect military service to the deepest sources of national identity.

But the liberation narrative also carries liabilities. The traumatic founding of the state, combined with the political violence that followed in the 1970s, bequeathed to Bangladesh's strategic culture a pattern of deep political polarization in which the armed forces have repeatedly been drawn into partisan conflicts, either as direct actors or as the forces that various civilian factions sought to harness for political advantage. This politicization of military culture, combined with the institutional autonomy that the armed forces developed during periods of direct governance, has produced a strategic culture in which civilian oversight is resisted as an affront to professional prerogative, where transparency is regarded as a security threat rather than a democratic requirement, and where the military's self-understanding centers on its institutional interests rather than its constitutional service function.

The reconstruction of strategic culture is not accomplished by legislation alone, though legislation creates the enabling conditions. It is accomplished through the sustained transformation of professional military education, through the development of a civilian strategic studies community capable of engaging the military on its own intellectual terrain, through the practice of democratic accountability that gradually normalizes civilian oversight as a functional expectation rather than a political imposition, and through the emergence of a generation of military leaders who have been educated in the constitutional framework of democratic defense governance and who internalize its norms as genuinely their own rather than as external constraints to be minimized.

This is the work of a generation, not a political term. It requires the institutional investments in defense education described in Part Fifteen, the legislative architecture described in Part Thirteen, the civil-military relations framework described throughout, and the sustained political will from civilian leadership to maintain democratic oversight even when it is institutionally inconvenient. The philosophical claim is that this reconstruction is both necessary and possible: necessary because the current strategic culture's liabilities outweigh its assets in the environment Bangladesh now faces, and possible because the July Revolution of 2024 demonstrated, with remarkable clarity, that Bangladesh's citizenry retains a powerful commitment to democratic values that can serve as the political foundation for the cultural reconstruction that democratic defense governance requires.

1.5 The Fourth Claim: The Jurisprudential Foundation of Defense Law

The fourth philosophical claim engages the relationship between law and defense in a constitutional democracy, and specifically the jurisprudential question of what kind of law can legitimately authorize the use of organized lethal force in the service of the state.

The jurisprudential tradition relevant to Bangladesh's defense legal framework is broader and deeper than the narrow positivism that has characterized much of Bangladesh's actual legislative practice. Hans Kelsen's pure theory of law located the validity of every legal norm in its derivation from a superior norm, ultimately grounded in a basic norm (the Grundnorm) that establishes the constitution as the supreme authority. This Kelsenian framework is directly

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

applicable to defense law: every statute, regulation, and operational order authorizing the use of military force must derive its validity from the constitutional framework, and any exercise of force not grounded in that framework is legally invalid regardless of its policy rationale.

Lon Fuller's procedural natural law tradition adds a requirement that Kelsen's formal framework does not directly address: the requirement that law must possess certain internal qualities, including generality, publicity, prospectivity, clarity, non-contradiction, practicability, stability, and congruence between the rules as announced and their actual administration, in order to be genuinely law rather than mere command. Applied to defense law, Fuller's criteria are demanding and, as this textbook's analysis of Bangladesh's existing legal framework has demonstrated, largely unmet. A legal framework for military operations that is classified, unpublicized, inconsistently administered, and applied retroactively to criminalize conduct that was not prohibited when it occurred fails Fuller's criteria as surely as any legislation does.

Ronald Dworkin's interpretive jurisprudence adds a third dimension: the claim that law is not simply a set of rules but a practice of interpretation oriented toward the best moral reading of the legal community's existing commitments. Applied to Bangladesh's constitutional defense framework, Dworkin's approach requires asking not merely what the Constitution's text says about defense but what moral reading of that text best honors the values of sovereignty, democracy, and human dignity that the Constitution as a whole is committed to. This interpretive approach opens a space for constitutional development that formal positivism forecloses: Bangladesh's defense law can be interpreted and developed in ways that are progressive without being revolutionary, faithful to constitutional text while responsive to the evolving security environment.

The Jurisprudential Foundation claim, therefore, is that Bangladesh's defense legal framework must be reconstructed on a three-layered jurisprudential basis: Kelsenian formal validity (all defense law must be constitutionally grounded), Fullerian procedural legitimacy (defense law must meet the internal criteria of genuine legality), and Dworkinian moral coherence (defense law must be interpretable as honoring the constitutional values of the political community it serves). The specific legislative architecture required to build this three-layered foundation is developed in Chapter Three of this part.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GEOPOLITICAL VERDICT - BANGLADESH'S STRATEGIC POSITION IN 2026 AND BEYOND

2.1 The Strategic Geography That Does Not Change

Every generation of Bangladesh's strategic thinkers must begin with the same geographical facts, because geography, unlike politics, does not change between elections. Bangladesh is a small, densely populated delta state, roughly 147,570 square kilometers of land, largely flat, criss-crossed by rivers, and positioned at a geographical crossroads of extraordinary strategic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

importance. To the north, south, and west lies India: a neighbor that is simultaneously the world's most populous state, a rising great power with nuclear weapons and an increasingly assertive foreign policy, Bangladesh's largest trade partner, the provider of water, energy, and transit connectivity on which Bangladesh's economic functioning depends, and the state that, more than any other external actor, has shaped Bangladesh's domestic political evolution over the five decades since liberation. To the east and southeast lies Myanmar, a state in the throes of a brutal civil war that has produced the world's largest stateless population, whose border violence spills across the Naf River with alarming regularity, and whose Arakan Army now controls substantial portions of Rakhine State in a configuration that transforms the strategic nature of Bangladesh's southeastern flank. To the south lies the Bay of Bengal: a maritime space of growing strategic importance as the Indo-Pacific geopolitical competition intensifies, as maritime trade routes become contested terrain, and as the contested waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone become the site of resource competition and strategic maneuvering among the great powers.

This geography generates what Kautilya's Mandala theory would recognize as a classic pattern of proximate enmity and distant alliance: India, as the immediate neighbor with asymmetric power, creates the structural condition of strategic dependence and anxiety that Bangladesh must manage with extraordinary care. China, as the neighbor's neighbor and the distant great power that counterbalances India's dominance, provides the structural basis for Bangladesh's most important external balancing relationship. The Bay of Bengal provides both Bangladesh's connection to the wider world through maritime trade and the strategic space within which great power competition is now being conducted through the competing projects of India's SAGAR initiative, China's Belt and Road maritime silk road, and the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy.

What has changed dramatically in the period from 2024 to 2026 is not the geography but the political configurations that mediate Bangladesh's relationship with that geography. The fall of Sheikh Hasina and the transition to the Yunus interim government, followed by the February 2026 elections that returned the BNP under Tariq Rehman, has reshuffled Bangladesh's bilateral relationships with all its major partners in ways whose full implications are still unfolding.

2.2 The India Relationship: From Golden Chapter to Strategic Recalibration

The India-Bangladesh relationship represents the single most consequential bilateral relationship in Bangladesh's security environment, and it is also the relationship that has undergone the most dramatic transformation since 2024. Understanding the current state of that relationship, its trajectory, and the defense policy implications requires both a historical account of what the relationship was and a frank analysis of what it has become.

For the fifteen years from 2009 to 2024, the Awami League government and the BJP-led Indian government under Narendra Modi constructed what both sides called a "Shonali Adhyaya" (Golden Chapter) in bilateral relations. The specific security dimensions of this golden chapter were substantial. Sheikh Hasina's government dismantled the camps and networks of anti-India insurgents in Bangladesh, including units of the United Liberation Front of Asom, and handed over several top insurgent leaders to Indian authorities. This dismantling of the insurgent infrastructure in Bangladesh, which had been a core Indian security grievance since the 1990s, transformed India's strategic calculus with respect to its northeastern frontier and was the single

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

most important factor driving Indian support for the Hasina government. In exchange, Bangladesh received favorable terms in trade negotiations, energy agreements including the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline through which India supplies approximately 180,000 tons of diesel annually from the Numaligarh refinery, connectivity projects including the Maitri Setu bridge, and the diplomatic backing that shielded Hasina's increasingly authoritarian governance from international criticism.

This relationship had always rested on political foundations that were narrower than its bilateral rhetoric suggested. The Awami League's close alignment with India was not shared by the BNP or by the Islamist parties that constitute a significant portion of Bangladesh's political landscape. Anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh is deep, historically grounded in genuine grievances about asymmetric water-sharing arrangements, the killing of Bangladeshi nationals at the border by Indian Border Security Forces, and the structural economic inequalities of a trading relationship between states of vastly different economic size, and politically exploitable by every opposition force. When Hasina fell, the accumulated resentments of fifteen years of what many Bangladeshis experienced as Indian-backed authoritarianism exploded into a virulence of anti-India feeling that has complicated every attempt at bilateral repair since.

The specific flashpoints of the 2024 to 2026 period are now well-documented. India's continued sheltering of Sheikh Hasina, who was sentenced to death in absentia by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal in November 2025, has created a legal and diplomatic standoff that no amount of diplomatic goodwill on either side can easily resolve. Bangladesh's recalibration of its foreign policy, including the resumption of direct trade with Pakistan for the first time since 1971, the participation of BNS Samudra Joy in Pakistan's Aman-25 naval exercise, the ISI-intelligence exchange of February 2025, the trilateral vice-ministerial meeting with China and Pakistan in Kunming in June 2025, and Muhammad Yunus's provocative remarks about Bangladesh being the "only guardian of the ocean" and the implications for India's northeastern states, has generated in New Delhi a level of strategic anxiety about Bangladesh's alignment that has produced economic coercion in response, including the withdrawal of the trans-shipment facility and the restriction of Bangladeshi garment imports to Kolkata and Mumbai sea-ports.

The water issue adds a structural dimension that transcends politics. The 1996 Ganga Water Sharing Treaty expires in December 2026, making its renegotiation an immediate necessity that will occur against a backdrop of severely degraded bilateral trust. The long-stalled Teesta agreement, blocked since 2011 by West Bengal's domestic politics, remains unresolved while the downstream consequences of upstream Indian water management continue to affect Bangladesh's agricultural calendar and its population's food security. India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack of April 2025 has added a new dimension of anxiety to Bangladesh's treaty calculations: if India is willing to use water as a strategic weapon against Pakistan, what prevents it from doing the same against Bangladesh if political conditions deteriorate further?

The defense policy implications of this relationship are multiple and demanding. Bangladesh cannot afford a genuinely adversarial relationship with India: the geographical and economic dependencies are simply too deep. India provides essential transit connectivity to Bangladesh's

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

northeastern regions, essential energy supplies through the friendship pipeline, and the counterbalancing diplomatic weight that prevents any single external power from dominating Bangladesh's strategic environment. At the same time, Bangladesh cannot afford a relationship of pure strategic subordination: the domestic political costs of appearing to be India's client state are prohibitively high, the security risks of an intelligence relationship that is too one-sided are real, and the self-respect of a sovereign state requires the capacity to disagree with a powerful neighbor on matters of genuine national interest.

The framework this textbook proposes for managing this relationship is elaborated in Chapter Five under the heading of Calibrated Strategic Autonomy. The core principle is that Bangladesh must maintain the relationship with India as a structural priority while refusing to allow that priority to slide into strategic subordination. This requires the institutional capacity to manage disagreements without rupture, the diplomatic skill to negotiate from a position of genuine engagement rather than either sycophancy or antagonism, and the strategic diversification of external partnerships that ensures Bangladesh is never wholly dependent on any single great power relationship.

2.3 The China Relationship: Arms, Infrastructure, and the Limits of Engagement

China's relationship with Bangladesh is the inverse of India's in several important respects: where India is the neighbor whose power is overwhelming and whose proximity is both asset and threat, China is the distant great power whose economic resources and military-industrial capacity make it indispensable while its strategic competition with India and the United States makes over-dependence dangerous. China accounts for more than two-thirds of total arms sales to Bangladesh, a concentration of dependency that creates both material capability and strategic vulnerability.

The vulnerability dimension has become impossible to ignore since 2024. The catalog of Chinese equipment failures documented in the period from 2022 to 2025 is alarming in its scope: rejected tank ammunition that had not been tested before supply in 2022; the crash of a K-8W trainer into Oxbow Lake in Jessore in 2018 that killed two pilots; the catastrophic crash of a Chinese-made F-7BGI jet into Dhaka's Milestone school in June 2025 that killed at least twenty people and injured two hundred; unsatisfactory radars from China Shipbuilding and Offshore International; poor after-sales support across multiple weapons systems. These failures represent not merely procurement errors but a systemic relationship problem in which China has treated Bangladesh as a market for older-generation equipment rather than as a strategic partner worth supplying with genuinely capable systems.

At the same time, China's Belt and Road infrastructure investments in Bangladesh, totaling approximately forty billion dollars across various projects, have created a web of economic relationships that cannot be easily unwound and that serve genuine developmental purposes even when their strategic implications are ambiguous. The deep-water port projects, the highway and railway connectivity investments, and the industrial zone developments represent real additions to Bangladesh's economic infrastructure even as they create the kind of deep economic entanglement that Kautilya's Arthashastra would recognize as a form of strategic leverage.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The defense policy challenge with respect to China is therefore one of managed diversification: reducing the concentration of arms dependency from above two-thirds to a more balanced proportion, insisting on genuine quality and technology transfer rather than accepting equipment of inferior standard, maintaining the economic and infrastructure relationship while developing the institutional capacity to evaluate Chinese projects on their strategic as well as developmental merits, and engaging China diplomatically from a position of genuine engagement rather than either clientelism or antagonism.

Turkey's emergence as Bangladesh's second major arms supplier, and the potential for further deepening of the Turkey-Bangladesh strategic relationship, is the most significant shift in Bangladesh's defense procurement landscape since 2024. Turkey's willingness to supply NATO-grade equipment with genuine technology transfer, including co-production and capacity-building agreements, addresses the most serious deficiency of the China relationship: the lack of genuine indigenous capability development. The proposed defense industrial complexes in Chittagong and Narayanganj in partnership with Turkish defense firms represent exactly the kind of technology transfer relationship that Bangladesh's own defense industrial policy requires. The Eurofighter Typhoon Letter of Intent signed by the Bangladesh Air Force with Leonardo S.p.A of Italy in December 2025, and the Japan-Bangladesh defense equipment transfer agreement signed in February 2026, suggest that the diversification of defense partnerships is proceeding on multiple fronts simultaneously.

2.4 The Myanmar Border: The Chronic Emergency

Bangladesh's southeastern border with Myanmar represents a category of security challenge fundamentally different from the India and China relationships. Where those relationships involve great powers with whom strategic management through diplomatic engagement is both necessary and possible, the Myanmar challenge involves a collapsing state, a brutal civil war, and armed non-state actors whose behavior is not subject to the kinds of diplomatic constraint that relations between recognized states imply.

The Arakan Army's consolidation of control over Rakhine State, accelerating through 2024 and 2025, has transformed the strategic nature of Bangladesh's southeastern flank. The Arakan Army is not the Myanmar military that Bangladesh has dealt with since 1978 through the various Rohingya crises: it is a different kind of actor, representing the ethnic Rakhine Buddhist population's nationalist project, with a sophisticated political wing (the United League of Arakan), a disciplined military structure, significant territorial control, and the kind of de facto governmental authority in its controlled areas that makes it a quasi-state actor rather than simply an armed group. Its relationship to the Rohingya population is complex and often hostile: the Arakan Army's nationalist project has not historically included a place for the Muslim Rohingya, and there have been documented instances of the Arakan Army committing atrocities against Rohingya communities.

For Bangladesh, which hosts approximately one million Rohingya refugees in the Cox's Bazar camps, the Arakan Army's consolidation of power in Rakhine creates a profound uncertainty about the prospect of Rohingya repatriation. If the Arakan Army establishes stable governance of Rakhine, Bangladesh must engage it directly on repatriation, regardless of the Myanmar

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

military's nominal sovereignty, because it is the Arakan Army, not Naypyidaw, that controls the territory to which the Rohingya would return. This is a fundamentally new diplomatic challenge for which Bangladesh's existing institutional frameworks are inadequate.

The border security dimension is equally demanding. The Naf River border with Rakhine State has become one of the most volatile frontier zones in the region. Armed non-state actors of various affiliations have established operational patterns that treat the border as permeable, Bangladeshi territory as operational space, and the refugee population as both a humanitarian crisis to be exploited and a recruiting ground for various armed projects. The Kuki-Chin National Army, operating in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, adds a further dimension of internal complexity that connects to the broader dynamics of Myanmar's civil war and to the pre-existing ethnic tensions of Bangladesh's own southeastern highlands.

Bangladesh's defense response to this chronic emergency requires simultaneously the military capability to secure the border against armed incursion, the diplomatic capacity to engage the Arakan Army as a de facto power broker, the humanitarian infrastructure to manage the refugee population in ways that prevent its exploitation by armed actors, and the intelligence capability to understand the complex network of armed groups operating in the borderland zone. The Kuki-Chin National Army challenge also raises the question of whether Bangladesh's counterinsurgency doctrine, developed primarily in the context of the liberation war and subsequent political crises, is adequate to the very different challenge of an armed ethnic group with external connectivity and a territorial project.

2.5 The Bay of Bengal: The Maritime Strategic Imperative

Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone of 118,813 square kilometers, adjudicated in Bangladesh's favor through the landmark international arbitration awards against both Myanmar in 2012 and India in 2014, represents a strategic resource of enormous potential that has not been adequately integrated into Bangladesh's defense planning or its development strategy.

The Bay of Bengal is now a contested strategic space in ways that it was not a generation ago. India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative, China's maritime Belt and Road and growing naval presence, the United States' Indo-Pacific Command's expanding engagement with Bay of Bengal littoral states, and the competing economic interests of multiple states in the seabed resources and fishing grounds of the Bay all create a strategic environment in which Bangladesh's maritime sovereignty requires active defense rather than passive assertion.

Bangladesh's navy, transformed significantly by the Forces Goal 2030 modernization program, has developed genuine three-dimensional capability through the acquisition of Type 035G Ming-class submarines, the indigenous shipbuilding programs at Khulna Shipyard, Dockyard and Engineering Works, and Chittagong Dry Dock, and the development of naval aviation through Dornier 228 NG maritime patrol aircraft and AgustaWestland AW109 helicopters. The proposed acquisition of multirole guided missile frigates from the Chittagong Dry Dock program represents the most ambitious indigenous naval construction effort in Bangladesh's history and will, if successful, substantially enhance Bangladesh's capacity to assert its maritime sovereignty.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The theoretical framework most applicable to Bangladesh's maritime strategy remains Mahanian in its fundamental insight: sea power derives from the ability to control sea lanes, protect commercial traffic, and project force within the maritime domain. For Bangladesh, which depends on maritime trade for virtually all of its international commerce, the protection of the sea lines of communication connecting Chittagong to the world is as important a defense priority as the protection of any land border. The threat to these sea lines is not at present primarily military but could become so in various scenarios of great power competition in the Bay of Bengal; the defense investment required to address this threat is therefore both current and prospective.

CHAPTER THREE: THE LEGISLATIVE ARCHITECTURE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE - THE COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT

3.1 The Legislative Lacuna and Why It Must Be Filled

Every previous part of this textbook has returned, from different analytical angles, to a single fundamental institutional deficiency in Bangladesh's defense governance architecture: the absence of a comprehensive statutory framework for defense governance that specifies with legislative precision the authority, accountability, and operational parameters of Bangladesh's defense establishment. This deficiency is not merely administrative inconvenience. It is a constitutional violation, because it allows an entire domain of state power, including the power to deploy lethal force and to conduct intelligence operations that directly affect citizens' fundamental rights, to be exercised without the kind of legislative authorization that Article 7 of the Constitution requires when it declares that all powers belong to the people.

The legislative architecture proposed in this chapter is the most ambitious single institutional reform proposal in this textbook. It would require, over a period of approximately three years, the enactment of a comprehensive National Defense Act that integrates and supersedes the fragmented legal instruments currently governing Bangladesh's defense establishment. Alongside this foundational Act, it would require companion legislation addressing intelligence governance, civil-military relations, defense procurement integrity, and the rights of military personnel. The legal drafting complexity of this project is substantial but manageable: comparable legislative reform projects have been successfully completed in South Korea (the 1970s and 1980s institutional reforms), South Africa (the post-apartheid defense transformation legislation of the 1990s), and most recently in Sri Lanka (the ongoing security sector reform process initiated in 2022).

What the Bangladesh project requires is sustained political will from the elected government, technical drafting capacity from the Ministry of Law, expert input from the academic and civil society defense studies community whose development was the subject of Part Fifteen, and the institutional engagement of the armed forces leadership in a process that treats them as partners in reform rather than objects of imposition. The philosophical premise of the reform must be

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

clear: it is not an attempt to weaken Bangladesh's defense capability but to strengthen it, by placing it on a legal and institutional foundation that generates the democratic legitimacy, the resource efficiency, the accountability, and the public trust that durable defense capability requires.

3.2 The Architecture of the National Defense Act: Core Provisions

The National Defense Act, as proposed in this textbook, would be organized in ten Parts, each addressing a distinct dimension of defense governance. The following sections describe each Part's content and rationale in sufficient detail to serve as the basis for a legislative drafting process.

Part One of the National Defense Act: Foundational Provisions and Constitutional Grounding

The foundational provisions would accomplish four things. First, they would establish the constitutional basis of the Act, explicitly deriving its authority from Articles 7, 21, 45, 46, and 152 of the Constitution, and declaring that all provisions of the Act are to be interpreted in conformity with the fundamental rights guaranteed by Part Three of the Constitution. This explicit constitutional grounding serves the Kelsenian requirement of formal validity and creates the interpretive framework for all subsequent provisions.

Second, they would define with precision the scope of the Act's coverage, specifying that it governs all three services of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Division, the intelligence agencies attached to the defense establishment, the Border Guard Bangladesh in its defense-related functions, the Bangladesh Coast Guard, and the various paramilitary forces whose command relationships with the defense establishment currently lack statutory clarity.

Third, they would specify the fundamental principles that govern the Act's interpretation: the supremacy of civilian democratic authority over the armed forces; the principle that military force may only be used under lawful authority and in accordance with international humanitarian law; the principle that members of the armed forces retain the fundamental rights of citizens except where specific constitutional provisions or this Act provides otherwise; and the principle of proportionality in the application of all coercive authority.

Fourth, they would establish the relationship between the National Defense Act and other legislation: that the Act supersedes all previous legislation inconsistent with it, that it operates alongside but does not supersede the Constitution, and that where its provisions require interpretation in relation to other legislation such as the criminal code and civil procedure, the Constitutional principles of the Act take precedence.

Part Two of the National Defense Act: The Civil-Military Command Structure

The second Part would codify in statute the chain of command that currently exists only in executive convention, with the critical difference that the statutory codification would specify the accountability relationships that convention has left ambiguous. The Prime Minister, as the Chief

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Executive of the parliamentary system, would be established as the ultimate civilian authority over the armed forces, exercising authority through the Cabinet Committee on National Security, whose composition, mandate, and procedures the Act would specify. The Minister of Defence would be established as the primary cabinet-level interface between the government and the armed forces, with specific statutory responsibilities for policy direction, budget oversight, and accountability to Parliament. The Chief of Defence Staff would be established in statute as the principal military advisor to the government, with a specified relationship to the three service chiefs, a clear mandate for joint operational planning, and specific obligations of transparency in the provision of military advice.

Critically, the statutory codification of the command structure would specify not merely the hierarchy of authority but the accountability relationships that run in the reverse direction: the obligation of military commanders to report to civilian authority, the prohibition on military action not authorized by civilian authority except in narrowly defined emergency circumstances with immediate notification obligations, and the personal legal liability of military commanders for the actions of forces under their command in violation of the Act.

Part Three of the National Defense Act: Parliamentary Oversight

The third Part would transform the current nominal parliamentary oversight of defense into genuinely effective democratic accountability. It would establish the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee as a statutory body with specified composition, clearance requirements for members handling classified information, investigative powers including subpoena authority, and a mandatory annual reporting requirement to the full Parliament. It would require the government to present to Parliament each year a classified Defense Review and an unclassified summary, specify the timeline and format of parliamentary approval for the defense budget, and create the Parliamentary Research Service's defense and security unit with statutory independence and specified staffing requirements.

The most controversial provision of Part Three would be the parliamentary approval requirement for specific categories of military deployment: the Act would require parliamentary authorization for any deployment of Bangladesh Armed Forces in a combat role outside Bangladesh, with an emergency exception for immediate self-defense requiring notification within forty-eight hours and parliamentary ratification within fourteen days. This provision, modeled on the War Powers Resolution concept applied in various democratic states including the United Kingdom's convention established after the Iraq War and Australia's parliamentary joint committee framework, would be the most significant institutional assertion of democratic authority over military action in Bangladesh's constitutional history.

Part Four of the National Defense Act: Defense Intelligence Governance

The fourth Part would address the single largest gap in Bangladesh's current legal framework: the absence of any comprehensive statutory basis for the operation of defense intelligence. The intelligence agencies attached to the armed forces, including the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence and the associated military intelligence structures, currently operate under ministerial regulation and internal military orders that provide no statutory basis, no legislative

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

oversight mechanism, and no legal framework for either the conduct of intelligence activities or the protection of citizens' rights against intelligence operations.

Part Four would establish the statutory basis for defense intelligence activities, specifying what activities defense intelligence agencies may conduct, under what authorization, subject to what oversight, and with what accountability for actions that violate citizens' rights. It would create an Intelligence Oversight Commissioner, appointed by the parliamentary committee and reporting to it, with access to all intelligence operations including those classified at the highest level, and with the authority to investigate complaints from citizens about intelligence operations affecting them. It would specify the conditions under which defense intelligence agencies may conduct surveillance of persons in Bangladesh, requiring in all cases either judicial authorization or, in emergencies, immediate post-facto judicial review. It would prohibit specifically defined categories of intelligence activity including political surveillance of non-security-threat persons, surveillance of journalists, civil society organizations, and members of Parliament engaged in their lawful functions, and the sharing of intelligence about Bangladeshi citizens with foreign intelligence agencies without specific ministerial authorization.

Part Five of the National Defense Act: Defense Procurement Integrity

The fifth Part would address what this textbook's analysis of Bangladesh's procurement history has identified as the most serious source of resource waste and institutional corruption in the defense establishment. It would establish a statutory Defense Procurement Authority, independent of the service commands and reporting jointly to the Ministry of Defence and the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee, with responsibility for managing all major defense procurement processes above a specified threshold value. The Authority's procedures would be specified in detail: competitive tendering requirements, independent technical evaluation panels, conflict of interest provisions applicable to military and civilian officials, mandatory publication of procurement decisions and their rationale (with classified technical specifications protected but decision rationale public), and independent audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Part would specify the legal consequences of corrupt procurement behavior, establishing specific criminal offenses for bribery in defense procurement with penalties substantially higher than for equivalent civilian offenses, reflecting the national security dimension of the harm. It would create a whistleblower protection framework for members of the armed forces and defense civilians who report procurement corruption, providing legal protection against retaliation that current arrangements completely lack.

Part Six of the National Defense Act: Rights of Military Personnel

The sixth Part would address a dimension of Bangladesh's military law that has been systematically neglected: the rights of the individuals who serve in the armed forces. The existing military law framework imposes extensive obligations on military personnel while providing minimal protections for their rights as citizens. Part Six would remedy this imbalance by specifying: the right of military personnel to legal representation in court martial proceedings; the right to challenge excessive punishment through an independent appeals body; protection

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

against summary punishment for conduct that would not constitute a criminal offense in civilian law; the right to seek judicial review of administrative decisions affecting service conditions and career; and the right to make representations to parliamentary or other oversight bodies about illegal orders or practices without being subject to retaliation.

These provisions would not weaken military discipline, which requires legitimate hierarchical authority, but would ensure that the discipline exercised is legitimate: grounded in law, administered through fair procedures, and subject to the kind of appeal and oversight that prevents abuse of authority. The comparative evidence from other democratic militaries, including those of the UK, Canada, and Australia, consistently shows that military discipline enforced through legitimate processes with appeal rights is more effective, not less, than discipline that relies on unchecked authority: because it generates the institutional trust and professional respect that genuine military effectiveness requires.

Parts Seven Through Ten: Supplementary and Transitional Provisions

The remaining Parts of the National Defense Act would address: Part Seven, the legal framework for civil-military cooperation in disaster response and humanitarian assistance, specifying the conditions and procedures under which the armed forces may be deployed domestically in support of civilian authorities; Part Eight, the framework for Bangladesh's participation in international peacekeeping operations, specifying the conditions of authorization, the standards of conduct applicable to Bangladeshi peacekeepers, and the accountability mechanisms for misconduct; Part Nine, the transitional provisions governing the transformation of existing legal arrangements into the new statutory framework, with specified timelines and transitional protections; and Part Ten, the amendment and review provisions, requiring five-yearly statutory review of the Act by the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee with mandatory public consultation.

3.3 The Intelligence Reform Act: A Companion Legislation

Alongside the National Defense Act, a companion Intelligence Reform Act would be required to address the civilian intelligence dimension of Bangladesh's security architecture. The current framework, in which organizations like the National Security Intelligence and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence operate under ministerial regulation with minimal statutory authorization and no effective oversight, is constitutionally unsound and operationally counterproductive.

The Intelligence Reform Act would accomplish three primary objectives. First, it would establish a statutory framework for all civilian intelligence activities, specifying authorization requirements, operational limitations, and oversight mechanisms that bring Bangladesh's intelligence governance into conformity with both constitutional requirements and international best practice. Second, it would establish the oversight architecture: the Intelligence Oversight Commissioner referred to in Part Four of the National Defense Act, a Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee with security-cleared members and investigative authority, and an independent Inspector General for intelligence activities reporting to both. Third, it would specify the legal framework for intelligence sharing with foreign agencies, creating the statutory

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

basis for the bilateral intelligence agreements that Bangladesh requires for its security cooperation with India, the United States, and other partners, while establishing the legal constraints that protect Bangladeshi citizens' information and interests.

3.4 The Defense Budget Transparency Act

A third companion legislation, the Defense Budget Transparency Act, would address the specific legislative requirements for democratic accountability in defense resource allocation. The current practice of parliamentary approval of the defense budget without genuine scrutiny, documented throughout this textbook's analysis of legislative oversight, is not merely a democratic deficiency but a practical security vulnerability: it ensures that resource allocation decisions are made without the benefit of informed debate, creating conditions in which procurement corruption, capability gaps, and strategic misalignments can persist indefinitely without legislative correction.

The Defense Budget Transparency Act would require the following: an annual Defense Review presented to Parliament in both classified and unclassified form, with the unclassified form providing sufficient detail for meaningful public debate; a Capability Assessment document presented annually by the Chief of Defence Staff through the Minister of Defence, specifying the capability implications of the proposed budget and the capability gaps that remain unfunded; an independent Parliamentary Budget Officer assessment of the defense budget's consistency with stated policy objectives; mandatory publication of multi-year defense spending projections to enable long-term capability planning; and a Defense Audit Committee with parliamentary appointment and real-time access to defense expenditure data.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DOCTRINE OF CALIBRATED DETERRENCE - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BANGLADESH'S MILITARY STRATEGY

4.1 The Doctrinal Vacuum and the Need to Fill It

Bangladesh has never published a formal defense white paper or a comprehensive statement of military doctrine. This absence is not merely an administrative omission: it represents a fundamental failure of strategic thinking and democratic accountability. Without a public statement of the principles and objectives that guide military force development and employment, parliamentary oversight of defense is systematically impaired, public debate about defense priorities is impossible, and the armed forces themselves lack the authoritative doctrinal guidance that effective operational planning requires.

The doctrine proposed in this chapter is offered as both a theoretical framework and a practical starting point for the development of Bangladesh's first publicly articulated military doctrine. It draws on the comparative experience of states that have developed doctrines appropriate to their

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

strategic circumstances as small and medium powers in asymmetric security environments: Finland's Total Defense doctrine, Vietnam's People's War framework, South Korea's integrated deterrence doctrine, Israel's security concept with its three pillars of early warning, deterrence, and decisive action, and Indonesia's territorial defense doctrine. It also draws on the theoretical frameworks most applicable to Bangladesh's specific strategic situation: defensive realism's insight that security-seeking behavior need not be escalatory, asymmetric deterrence theory's analysis of how smaller powers can deter larger ones through credible cost-imposition rather than symmetric force matching, and resilience theory's understanding of how non-military dimensions of national power contribute to deterrence.

4.2 The Strategic Concept: Defensive Deterrence with Diplomatic Primacy

Bangladesh's strategic concept, as proposed here, rests on four pillars that together constitute a doctrine of Calibrated Deterrence. The doctrine takes its name from the requirement that Bangladesh's deterrent posture be calibrated to its specific strategic circumstances: calibrated in the sense of precisely adjusted to the nature of the threats it faces, the capabilities it possesses, and the diplomatic constraints within which its use of force must remain.

The first pillar is Diplomatic Primacy: the principle that Bangladesh's first line of defense is diplomacy, and that military capability exists to support and strengthen the diplomatic framework rather than to substitute for it. This pillar reflects both the strategic reality that Bangladesh, as a state without great power status or nuclear weapons, cannot rely on military force as its primary instrument of security, and the constitutional reality that Bangladesh's founding political commitments include a strong orientation toward international law, peaceful dispute resolution, and multilateral institutions. Bangladesh's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, which as of 2026 remains the largest in absolute troop numbers in the world, is not merely a source of foreign exchange earnings and operational experience: it is the most visible expression of Bangladesh's diplomatic identity as a state committed to international peace and security. This commitment must be maintained and deepened, not treated as a burden to be reduced.

The second pillar is Resilient Defense: the principle that Bangladesh's military strategy prioritizes the ability to impose unacceptable costs on any aggressor rather than the ability to defeat that aggressor in a symmetric military confrontation. This asymmetric logic, which draws on the deterrence by punishment framework developed in strategic studies by scholars including Robert Pape and T.V. Paul, is the appropriate doctrinal response to Bangladesh's position as a state facing potential adversaries with vastly superior overall military power. Bangladesh cannot match India's military in a symmetric conventional confrontation, and would be foolish to attempt to do so. What it can credibly threaten is the imposition of costs, through a combination of border defense capability, territorial defense in depth, asymmetric naval capability in the littoral zone, and the diplomatic and reputational costs of being seen to attack a smaller democratic neighbor, sufficient to make military coercion against Bangladesh strategically irrational for any potential adversary.

The third pillar is Strategic Autonomy: the principle that Bangladesh must maintain sufficient independence across its external partnerships to prevent any single great power from acquiring

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

the strategic leverage that would allow it to coerce Bangladesh's strategic decisions. This pillar directly addresses the most fundamental vulnerability that Bangladesh's current strategic situation presents: the combination of deep economic dependence on China for arms supply and infrastructure investment, deep logistical dependence on India for energy, transit, and water, and increasing engagement with the United States and its partners in ways that risk drawing Bangladesh into great power competition it has neither the capability nor the interest to manage. Strategic Autonomy does not mean non-alignment in the Cold War sense of refusing all external partnerships: it means the deliberate diversification of partnerships, with Turkey, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and others playing expanded roles alongside the great powers, in a configuration that ensures no single partner can make credible coercive demands on Bangladesh's strategic choices.

The fourth pillar is Internal Cohesion: the principle that Bangladesh's national security rests on foundations of domestic political stability, social solidarity, and economic resilience that are as important as any military capability, and that security policy must therefore be designed with explicit attention to its implications for these non-military foundations of national strength. This pillar draws on the theoretical literature on national resilience developed by scholars including Rod Thornton and Alex Wilner, on Finland's Total Defense concept which explicitly integrates civilian and military dimensions of national security, and on the historical experience of states including Vietnam and Israel that have maintained their security against much larger adversaries through the mobilization of societal resources that extend well beyond the formal military establishment.

4.3 The Force Development Implications of Calibrated Deterrence

The Calibrated Deterrence doctrine has specific implications for how Bangladesh should develop its military forces over the decade from 2026 to 2036, given the budget constraints that the FY2025-26 defense budget of approximately 40,698 crore taka represents. These implications differ in important ways from the current trajectory of Forces Goal 2030 as revised, and the differences are worth specifying explicitly.

On the Army, the doctrine implies a shift from the current emphasis on conventional heavy force development, including the MBT-2000 main battle tanks and the mechanized infantry formations, toward a lighter, more mobile, and more versatile force organized around rapid deployment, territorial defense in depth, and special operations capability. The proposed Joint Special Operations Command announced in 2025 is a step in the right direction. The emphasis on heavier armor, while understandable from a conventional deterrence logic, consumes disproportionate resources for a threat environment in which armored breakthrough against a fortified border is a less likely scenario than guerrilla incursion, non-state armed group infiltration, or gray zone operations that require a different kind of military response. The Javelin anti-tank system evaluation announced in November 2025, by contrast, represents exactly the kind of asymmetric capability investment that the Calibrated Deterrence doctrine commends: a relatively inexpensive system that dramatically increases the cost of armored assault against Bangladeshi forces.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

On the Navy, the doctrine strongly endorses the current trajectory of naval development, which represents the most strategically sound element of Bangladesh's current force development program. The indigenous shipbuilding program, the submarine acquisition, the development of naval aviation, and the proposed multirole guided missile frigates all align with the maritime dimension of Bangladesh's strategic requirements. The EEZ is an economic and strategic asset of the highest importance, and the naval capability to assert and defend it is a core national interest. The doctrine would add to the current naval program an enhanced mine warfare capability, which provides a cost-effective asymmetric deterrent against conventional naval attack, and a more robust coastal defense missile capability that extends deterrence into the littoral zone.

On the Air Force, the doctrine identifies the most urgent capability gap in Bangladesh's current force structure. The aging fleet of F-7BGI fighters, now discredited by the Milestone school crash of June 2025, and the MiG-29s, which are of 1980s generation technology, leave Bangladesh with a critically inadequate air defense capability. The Letter of Intent with Leonardo for the Eurofighter Typhoon, while representing the most capable option under consideration, must be evaluated against the budget reality: Eurofighter Typhoon unit costs are approximately 90 to 110 million US dollars, placing the cost of a meaningful fleet of even twenty-four aircraft at well over two billion dollars that Bangladesh's current defense budget cannot accommodate. The JF-17 Block III, jointly developed by Pakistan and China and available at a fraction of the Typhoon's cost, presents the alternative that budget reality may impose, despite its strategic complications in the India relationship context. The doctrine argues for a two-track approach: near-term acquisition of a transitional fleet of JF-17 or equivalent at scale sufficient to address the immediate air defense gap, combined with a longer-term program toward a more capable Western or Western-associated platform as budget conditions and strategic relationships permit.

4.4 The Doctrine of Gray Zone Defense

The Calibrated Deterrence doctrine includes a specific Gray Zone Defense component that addresses the spectrum of non-conventional threats that Bangladesh faces and that conventional military doctrine is inadequate to address. Gray zone threats, as defined throughout this textbook, include information operations designed to manipulate Bangladesh's political environment, economic coercion applied to leverage Bangladesh's strategic decisions, cyber operations against critical infrastructure, support to non-state armed groups as instruments of proxy pressure, and the manipulation of the refugee crisis as a tool of strategic displacement.

Defending against these threats requires capabilities that are partly military, partly intelligence, partly diplomatic, and partly the product of social resilience. The military dimension includes: a dedicated cyber defense capability, currently being developed within the armed forces but requiring significant expansion and civilian-military integration to be effective; an information operations awareness and counter-influence function; and the special operations forces whose training for non-conventional operations the proposed Joint Special Operations Command would develop.

The intelligence dimension requires exactly the reforms described in Chapter Three: a legally grounded, adequately resourced, and properly overseen intelligence architecture capable of early

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

detection of gray zone operations and providing the warning to civilian decision-makers that effective response requires.

The diplomatic dimension requires the cultivation of the international partnerships, especially with democratic states that share the interest in resisting gray zone coercion by authoritarian great powers, that provide both the early warning of operations directed at Bangladesh and the diplomatic support that amplifies Bangladesh's responses.

The social resilience dimension requires investment in the institutional and social foundations of national cohesion: the democratic accountability mechanisms that build public trust, the economic policies that reduce the vulnerabilities that economic coercion exploits, the information environment regulations that limit the effectiveness of foreign information operations, and the civic education that prepares Bangladesh's population to recognize and resist manipulation.

4.5 The Nuclear Dimension: Managing the Neighborhood's Strategic Reality

Bangladesh is not a nuclear power and has no credible path to becoming one within any planning horizon relevant to current policy. But it operates in a nuclear neighborhood: India and Pakistan both possess nuclear weapons, have a history of nuclear posturing in their bilateral crises, and have the shadow of their nuclear arsenals falling across every military calculation in the region. China, Bangladesh's principal arms supplier and a major partner, is a nuclear power of growing strategic ambition. Understanding how nuclear deterrence in the neighborhood affects Bangladesh's security environment is therefore an essential component of strategic analysis.

The primary nuclear concern for Bangladesh is not the possibility of being targeted with nuclear weapons, which is effectively zero in any realistic threat assessment: no state has any conceivable nuclear interest in attacking Bangladesh. The concern is how nuclear weapons affect the strategic behavior of Bangladesh's neighbors in ways that indirectly affect Bangladesh's security environment. The most important indirect effect is the stability-instability paradox: the phenomenon, identified by Glenn Snyder in 1965, whereby nuclear deterrence at the strategic level paradoxically makes conventional and below-conventional aggression more likely, because both sides understand that nuclear weapons will not be used and that therefore the conflict space below the nuclear threshold is available for competitive behavior. In the India-Pakistan context, this paradox has produced precisely what the theory predicts: the nuclear standoff has not prevented but has actually facilitated a more aggressive Pakistan-sponsored proxy war in Kashmir and a more aggressive pattern of Indian counter-terrorism operations across the border. For Bangladesh, the stability-instability paradox means that it cannot rely on India's nuclear arsenal to deter conventional or gray zone operations against it: indeed, India's nuclear status may make conventional coercion of Bangladesh more, rather than less, likely by removing any risk of escalation that might otherwise constrain Indian behavior.

The policy implication is that Bangladesh's deterrence calculus must operate primarily in the conventional and gray zone domains, and that the Calibrated Deterrence framework proposed here is precisely calibrated to those domains rather than to a nuclear threat environment that is not Bangladesh's primary concern.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GRAND STRATEGY FRAMEWORK - AN INTEGRATED VISION FOR 2026 TO 2040

5.1 Grand Strategy and Its Requirements

Grand strategy, as defined by the theorists B.H. Liddell Hart, Paul Kennedy, and Hal Brands, is the art of coordinating all the resources of a state, diplomatic, economic, military, informational, and social, in service of the state's fundamental security and developmental objectives. It is distinct from military strategy, which is the operational art of deploying military force, and from foreign policy, which is the diplomatic management of external relationships: grand strategy integrates all of these into a unified framework oriented toward the state's most fundamental interests over the long term.

Bangladesh has never had a formal grand strategy. Its approach to its own security and development has been characterized by what might generously be called tactical pragmatism and less generously as strategic drift: the management of immediate pressures without a clear long-term framework that provides coherent guidance for the inevitable trade-offs between competing priorities. The result has been a pattern in which short-term political considerations regularly override long-term strategic interests, in which inconsistent signaling to external partners undermines the diplomatic coherence that Bangladesh's position requires, and in which the armed forces, the intelligence agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the economic ministries pursue their individual institutional interests without an integrating framework that aligns them toward common strategic objectives.

The Grand Strategy Framework proposed in this chapter is Bangladesh's first attempt to provide that integrating framework. It is organized around five strategic objectives, each of which is pursued through multiple instruments, and each of which is connected to the others through explicit linkages that prevent the optimization of one objective at unacceptable cost to the others.

5.2 The Five Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective One: Sovereign Integrity and Constitutional Governance

The first and foundational strategic objective is the protection of Bangladesh's territorial integrity and the preservation of its constitutional democratic governance. This objective encompasses the conventional military defense of borders, the maritime assertion of sovereignty in the EEZ, the maintenance of political stability through democratic processes, and the prevention of external interference in Bangladesh's domestic political life. The instruments for this objective include: the armed forces, reformed and developed along the lines proposed in Chapter Four; the diplomatic framework of bilateral and multilateral relationships that create the costs of aggression; the intelligence architecture reformed as proposed in Chapter Three; the democratic

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

institutions whose legitimacy and effectiveness make them worth defending; and the constitutional framework itself, whose protection is both an end and a means of national security.

This objective requires specific attention to its internal dimension. The greatest threat to Bangladesh's constitutional governance is not external military attack but internal political instability, the manipulation of democratic processes by partisan, military, or external actors, and the erosion of constitutional norms through the accumulation of emergency powers and the degradation of institutional accountability. The defense of constitutional governance is therefore as much a domestic political and legal project as a military one, and the institutional reforms proposed throughout this textbook are direct contributions to this strategic objective.

Strategic Objective Two: Economic Security and Development

The second strategic objective is the protection and advancement of the economic foundations of Bangladesh's power and development. This objective recognizes, in the tradition of Paul Kennedy's analysis of the relationship between economic capacity and strategic power, that Bangladesh's long-term security ultimately rests on the continued strengthening of its economic base: the garment industry that provides the foreign exchange necessary for defense imports, the agricultural productivity that provides food security, the maritime trade routes that connect Bangladesh to the global economy, and the energy supply arrangements that power the industrial and agricultural systems on which the population's welfare depends.

The defense policy implications of this economic security objective are more extensive than conventional military analysis recognizes. The protection of the maritime trade routes through the Bay of Bengal is a direct economic security interest that requires naval capability. The resilience of the energy supply, including the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline that provides diesel from the Numaligarh refinery and the LNG import infrastructure increasingly under development, is an economic security interest that requires both diplomatic management of the supply relationships and the development of sufficient supply diversity to prevent coercive leverage. The Teesta and Ganga water agreements, whose renegotiation is imminent, are simultaneously diplomatic, economic, and strategic issues: the agricultural calendar of Bangladesh's northern districts depends on dry-season water flows whose disruption would constitute a genuine security crisis. The economic security objective therefore requires a comprehensive water diplomacy strategy that coordinates the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Water Ministry, and the defense establishment in a unified negotiating position.

Strategic Objective Three: Regional Stability and Diplomatic Engagement

The third strategic objective is the cultivation of a regional environment sufficiently stable to allow Bangladesh's own development to proceed without the chronic disruptions that regional instability imposes. This objective encompasses Bangladesh's relationship with India, which must be managed toward the kind of functional cooperation that serves both states' interests rather than the antagonistic posturing that neither can afford; Bangladesh's engagement with the Myanmar civil war and its regional implications; Bangladesh's participation in SAARC, BIMSTEC, and other regional multilateral frameworks; and Bangladesh's approach to the great power competition in the Bay of Bengal region.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The Myanmar dimension of this objective is the most immediately urgent and the most institutionally demanding. The proposal developed in this textbook is for the creation of a dedicated Bangladesh-Myanmar Policy Cell within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with staffing that includes both diplomatic and security expertise, mandated to develop and coordinate all aspects of Bangladesh's engagement with the Myanmar civil war and its border consequences. This Cell would develop the channels of engagement with the Arakan Army as a de facto power broker, manage the diplomatic dimensions of the refugee repatriation challenge, coordinate the border security response with the armed forces and Border Guard Bangladesh, and provide the unified policy direction that the current fragmented inter-agency approach cannot supply.

The India dimension of this objective requires the careful sequencing of issue resolution that prevents any single flashpoint, whether the Hasina extradition demand, the Teesta agreement, the Ganga treaty renegotiation, or border security incidents, from derailing the broader relationship that both states require. The International Crisis Group's December 2025 report on Bangladesh-India relations correctly identified the February 2026 elections as a potential reset point, and the early diplomatic moves of the Tariq Rehman government suggest that the reset is proceeding, however cautiously. Bangladesh's grand strategy requires that this reset be managed with the strategic patience and diplomatic precision that the relationship's importance demands.

Strategic Objective Four: Strategic Autonomy Through Partnership Diversification

The fourth strategic objective is the maintenance of Bangladesh's strategic autonomy through the deliberate diversification of its external partnerships in a way that prevents any single power from acquiring the leverage over Bangladesh's strategic decisions that overdependence creates. This objective directly addresses the structural vulnerability that Bangladesh's current partnership configuration creates: the combination of Chinese arms dominance, Indian logistical and energy dependence, and the nascent but potentially leverage-creating security engagement with the United States creates a configuration in which Bangladesh is simultaneously dependent on three great powers whose competing interests in Bangladesh's alignment create pressures that Bangladesh's current institutional capacity is inadequate to manage.

The diversification program recommended in this textbook has several dimensions. Turkey's emergence as a genuine defense industrial partner should be developed as rapidly as institutional capacity allows, with the proposed defense industrial complexes in Chittagong and Narayanganj becoming a priority investment rather than a distant aspiration. Japan's February 2026 defense equipment transfer agreement should be deepened into a comprehensive security partnership that includes Japan's financial capacity to support defense infrastructure development, its advanced technology in maritime surveillance, and its diplomatic weight in the Indo-Pacific framework. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which already receive large numbers of Bangladeshi migrant workers, should be engaged as security partners in the Gulf cooperation frameworks that connect to Bangladesh's maritime interests in the Indian Ocean. Indonesia and Malaysia, as ASEAN partners sharing Bangladesh's interest in a rules-based maritime order in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, should be cultivated as strategic partners whose combined weight can amplify Bangladesh's diplomatic voice in regional forums.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The goal of this diversification is not to replace the great power relationships but to create a partnership configuration sufficiently diverse that no single partner's leverage is decisive. A Bangladesh that is a valuable partner to Turkey, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as to China, India, and the United States, is in a fundamentally stronger strategic position than a Bangladesh dependent on any two or three of these partners alone.

Strategic Objective Five: Sustainable Defense Capability

The fifth strategic objective is the development of a defense capability that is sustainable over the long term within Bangladesh's economic constraints, built on an expanding foundation of indigenous production, and appropriately calibrated to the actual security threats Bangladesh faces rather than to status competition or service preferences. This objective directly challenges the current trajectory of the Forces Goal 2030 revised program, which the proposed $75 billion defense modernization program spanning 2026 to 2040 represents in its most ambitious form.

The $75 billion figure represents approximately 5 to 6 percent of Bangladesh's current GDP per year over a fifteen-year period, which is roughly triple the current defense spending ratio and well beyond what Bangladesh's economic trajectory can sustainably support without severe opportunity costs in health, education, and infrastructure. The grand strategy framework proposed here does not set a specific spending target but insists on a sustainability test: all defense capability development must be evaluated against the opportunity cost of equivalent investment in the economic, social, and institutional foundations of national power, and the resulting portfolio must represent a genuine balance between military capability and the broader dimensions of national security that economic resilience, social cohesion, and institutional legitimacy constitute.

The indigenous defense industry development program, which Part Nine of this textbook analyzed in detail, is central to the sustainability objective because it gradually reduces the foreign exchange cost of defense capability maintenance, builds the industrial capacity that supports both military and civilian technology development, and creates the institutional knowledge base that makes Bangladesh a more competent and confident participant in defense technology negotiations with foreign suppliers. The ordnance factory development at Chittagong, announced in July 2025, the BD-08 assault rifle and BD-15 LMG production, the artillery shell manufacturing capacity, and the tank upgrade programs all represent genuine steps in the right direction whose acceleration and institutionalization should be a priority of the next several years.

5.3 The Diplomatic Framework: Institutional Architecture for Grand Strategy Implementation

A grand strategy requires institutional implementation. The propositions and frameworks elaborated in the previous sections require a diplomatic institutional architecture capable of coordinating across the multiple instruments of national power in a coherent, sustained, and adaptive way. Bangladesh's current foreign policy architecture, centered on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its limited specialist capacity, inadequate interagency coordination

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

mechanisms, and insufficient analytical infrastructure, is not adequate to the implementation of the grand strategy proposed here.

The institutional reforms required are both organizational and personnel. Organizationally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requires a National Security Policy Planning unit with the mandate and the authority to develop and coordinate the cross-ministry policy proposals that grand strategy implementation requires: water policy coordinating with the Water Ministry and the armed forces; energy security policy coordinating with the Energy Ministry, the armed forces, and the intelligence establishment; economic security policy coordinating with the Commerce Ministry, the Bangladesh Bank, and the Investment Development Authority; and the Myanmar policy coordinated through the dedicated Bangladesh-Myanmar Policy Cell proposed above. The Foreign Affairs Ministry also requires an enhanced Strategic Research capacity, separate from its policy planning function, that monitors and analyzes the rapidly evolving security environment and provides the analytical foundation for the strategic decisions that the policy planning unit must coordinate.

Personnel reforms are equally essential. Bangladesh's foreign service has historically been staffed by generalist officials whose career paths do not encourage the development of deep expertise in security affairs, defense policy, intelligence, or the specialized economic and technical dimensions of contemporary diplomacy. The grand strategy implementation requires a cadre of foreign service officers with genuine expertise in these domains, developed through dedicated training programs, strategic partnership with academic institutions, and career incentive structures that reward specialization rather than penalizing it.

CHAPTER SIX: THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS - INTERNATIONAL LAW, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND THE ETHICS OF FORCE

6.1 Bangladesh's International Legal Commitments and Their Defense Policy Implications

Bangladesh has ratified, acceded to, or otherwise committed to a comprehensive body of international law that directly constrains and shapes its defense policy in ways that are insufficiently integrated into either its military doctrine or its legislative framework. The comprehensive account of these commitments and their defense policy implications is an essential component of the normative synthesis that this final part offers.

The United Nations Charter, to which Bangladesh acceded as a founding member of the UN's post-colonial generation, prohibits in Article 2(4) the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, and permits in Article 51 the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense only if an armed attack occurs against a state. This framework, combined with the Security Council's authority under Chapter VII to authorize

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

collective security action, constitutes the foundational legal framework within which Bangladesh's military force may lawfully be employed.

The practical application of this framework to Bangladesh's specific security environment raises several complex legal questions that its current legislative and doctrinal framework does not adequately address. The first is the preemptive versus preventive force distinction: international law permits preemptive force in the face of an imminent armed attack (the standard articulated in the Caroline case of 1837 and refined in subsequent customary international law) but prohibits preventive force against non-imminent threats even when those threats are serious and certain. Bangladesh's draft military doctrine must engage this distinction explicitly, because the gray zone threat environment it faces includes situations in which the line between imminent and non-imminent threat will be contested, and Bangladesh's forces and commanders require clear legal guidance.

The second complex issue is the law applicable to Bangladesh's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Bangladesh's peacekeepers have served in some of the world's most difficult conflict environments, and have faced situations in which the application of force, including potentially lethal force, was required to protect civilians or to defend themselves. The legal framework governing force in peacekeeping is distinct from both the law of international armed conflict and the domestic criminal law, and involves the complex interaction of the UN mandate, the Status of Forces Agreement with the host state, customary international humanitarian law, and the rules of engagement issued by the UN mission commander. Bangladesh's military legal education, documented as deficient in Part Fifteen of this textbook, requires substantial development to ensure that every Bangladeshi peacekeeper has adequate legal training for the situations they are likely to face.

The third complex issue is the application of international humanitarian law to Bangladesh's own internal security operations. Bangladesh is not a party to an international armed conflict, but the conflict dynamics in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the complex security environment of the southeastern border zone raise questions about the applicable legal framework for military operations conducted in that environment. Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions applies to all armed conflicts not of an international character and imposes minimum standards of humane treatment that bind Bangladesh's armed forces in any internal armed conflict scenario. Protocol II, which Bangladesh has ratified, provides additional protections applicable to non-international armed conflicts above a certain threshold of intensity. Bangladesh's military forces operating in internal security roles require clear doctrine and training on these legal constraints.

6.2 The Human Rights Framework and Defense Operations

The international human rights framework, centering on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both of which Bangladesh has ratified, creates a further set of legal constraints on defense-related activities that Bangladesh's defense legal framework does not adequately incorporate. The ICCPR's protections, including the right to life, the prohibition of torture and cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment, the right to liberty and security of person, the right to fair

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

trial, and the right to freedom of expression, opinion, and association, all apply to the conduct of Bangladesh's security forces whether military or paramilitary.

The Human Rights Committee's interpretation of ICCPR Article 6 (the right to life) is directly applicable to Bangladesh's rules of engagement for security operations: arbitrary deprivation of life by state agents, including security forces, violates the Covenant, and the standard of arbitrariness extends beyond mere prohibition of intentional killing to require that any lethal force used by security forces be strictly necessary, proportionate, and employed only as a last resort. These standards, equivalent to those required by the UN's Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, must be embedded in Bangladesh's military and paramilitary rules of engagement, military doctrine, and professional military education.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit and subsequently developed through Security Council resolutions, raises a specific question for Bangladesh's defense policy. R2P holds that where a state manifestly fails to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, the international community has the responsibility to intervene, including through military force if necessary. Bangladesh's experience with the Rohingya crisis provides both a victim's perspective (Bangladesh has borne the human cost of Myanmar's ethnic cleansing campaign) and a potential actor's perspective (if the Arakan Army's consolidation of power in Rakhine is accompanied by further atrocities against the remaining Rohingya population, Bangladesh will face profound pressure to respond in some way). Bangladesh's grand strategy framework requires a clear position on R2P: whether and under what conditions Bangladesh would support Security Council authorization of R2P-grounded intervention in Myanmar, and what Bangladesh's own role in any such operation might be.

6.3 The Ethics of Force: Just War Theory Revisited

The just war tradition, traced in Part One of this textbook from Cicero through Augustine and Aquinas to its contemporary manifestation in international humanitarian law and the UN Charter framework, provides the ethical foundation for thinking about the legitimate use of military force. The synthesis offered in this final part revisits that tradition in the light of the specific ethical challenges that Bangladesh's security environment presents.

The jus ad bellum criteria (the conditions that must be met for a decision to use force to be ethically and legally justified) include: legitimate authority, just cause, right intention, proportionality of ends, reasonable prospect of success, and last resort. Applied to Bangladesh's strategic situation, these criteria generate specific ethical requirements. The legitimate authority requirement means that force may only be authorized through the constitutional and legal processes specified in the National Defense Act proposed in Chapter Three: parliamentary authorization for combat deployments, executive authorization within parliamentary constraints for immediate self-defense. The just cause requirement means that force may only be used in genuine self-defense against armed attack or imminent threat thereof, or in support of UN-authorized collective security action: the use of military force to advance political objectives of any partisan faction is ethically and constitutionally impermissible. The right intention requirement means that even a legally authorized use of force may be ethically impermissible if

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

its actual motivation is punitive, retributive, or intended to produce civilian suffering beyond what the military objective requires.

The jus in bello criteria (the conditions that must be met for the conduct of military operations to be ethically justified) include: discrimination between combatants and civilians, proportionality of means to military objectives, and the prohibition of weapons causing unnecessary suffering. These criteria, codified in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, are directly applicable to every military operation that Bangladesh's armed forces conduct, from border security operations against armed incursions to participation in UN peacekeeping missions. The training of Bangladesh's armed forces in the application of these criteria, documented as inadequate in Part Fifteen's analysis of military professional education, must be substantially strengthened.

The contemporary ethical challenge that just war theory has most difficulty addressing is the gray zone: the space between clear armed conflict, where international humanitarian law applies with relative clarity, and clear peacetime competition, where both the law of armed conflict and the use of force prohibition of the UN Charter are plainly inapplicable. When Bangladesh's military forces detect a gray zone information operation being conducted against Bangladesh's democratic processes, or a gray zone cyber operation targeting Bangladesh's critical infrastructure, or the manipulation of the refugee population as a tool of strategic pressure, what ethical and legal framework governs their response? This question does not yet have a settled answer in international law, and the theorists working on it, including Michael Schmitt, whose Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations represents the most systematic effort to extend existing international law frameworks into the cyber domain, are developing an emerging consensus that the existing frameworks can and should be extended by analogy. Bangladesh's defense legal framework and its military doctrine must engage this emerging consensus.

6.4 Controversies: The Extrajudicial Killing Question and Bangladesh's Record

No discussion of the normative foundations of Bangladesh's defense policy can be complete without engaging directly with the most serious and persistent human rights controversies associated with Bangladesh's security forces: the allegations of extrajudicial killings conducted by the Rapid Action Battalion and other security forces, the enforced disappearances that human rights organizations documented throughout the Hasina period, and the broader pattern of security force impunity that has been the subject of international criticism and of domestic political controversy.

The Rapid Action Battalion, established in 2004 as an elite counter-terrorism force composed of personnel from the army, navy, air force, police, and other agencies, became under the Hasina government the primary instrument of what human rights organizations including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented as a systematic pattern of extrajudicial killings labeled "crossfire" incidents, in which detainees were killed while in RAB custody in circumstances subsequently represented as encounters with armed criminals. The United States imposed sanctions on the RAB and six of its current and former senior officials in December 2021 under the Global Magnitsky Act, citing "gross violations of human rights." The July

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Revolution of 2024 and the subsequent interim government created the political conditions for a reassessment of the RAB, and its institutional future remains contested in Bangladesh's ongoing reform debate.

The defense policy synthesis offered here takes a clear position on this controversy: the extrajudicial use of lethal force by security forces, regardless of the perceived utility of the killings in terms of crime suppression or counter-terrorism effectiveness, is constitutionally impermissible, ethically indefensible, and strategically counterproductive. It is constitutionally impermissible because Article 31 of Bangladesh's Constitution guarantees every person the right to be treated in accordance with law, and Article 35 prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. It is ethically indefensible under both the just war tradition and the international human rights framework examined in this chapter. And it is strategically counterproductive because, as the empirical research on counter-terrorism effectiveness consistently shows, security force impunity and the extrajudicial use of lethal force generate the grievances, the radicalization, and the loss of public trust that ultimately strengthen the very threats that the security forces are supposed to be combating.

The reform of the RAB and the broader institutional culture of security force impunity is therefore not merely a human rights requirement but a strategic necessity. The legislative architecture proposed in Chapter Three, including the statutory accountability framework for security force operations, the intelligence oversight mechanism, and the rights protection framework, provides the institutional basis for this reform.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SEVERAL DRAFT DEFENSE POLICY FRAMEWORKS - NECESSITY-BASED DRAFTING

7.1 The Drafting Methodology: Necessity-Based Policy Formulation

The proposal for a comprehensive Bangladesh Defense Policy requires translation into actual policy documents of different types, addressing different audiences and serving different institutional functions. This chapter provides several distinct draft frameworks, each designed for a specific necessity and context. The methodology employed is what this textbook calls necessity-based drafting: the form, content, and level of detail of each draft is determined by the specific institutional necessity it must serve, rather than by a single template applied uniformly across different functions.

Five draft frameworks are presented: a National Defense Policy Statement suitable for parliamentary adoption; a Defense White Paper framework suitable for public release; a draft preamble and key provisions of the National Defense Act; a Defense Procurement Policy directive; and a draft Bangladesh Defense Doctrine statement suitable for military doctrine publication.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

7.2 Draft One: The National Defense Policy Statement

NATIONAL DEFENSE POLICY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Adopted by the Parliament of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Preamble

We, the people of Bangladesh, having achieved our independence through the liberation struggle of 1971 in which the sacrifice of millions established the inalienable right of this nation to sovereignty, democracy, and dignified existence, and having inscribed in our Constitution the principles of nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism as the foundations of our political life, do hereby establish this National Defense Policy as the authoritative expression of our democratic will regarding the organization, purpose, and governance of the defense of our beloved country.

This policy is rooted in the conviction that the security of Bangladesh is ultimately the security of its people: their right to live in dignity and freedom, their right to enjoy the fruits of their labor without fear of external coercion or internal oppression, their right to determine their own political future through democratic processes, and their right to a state whose institutions serve their interests with transparency and accountability. A defense policy that loses sight of these human foundations, that mistakes the interests of military institutions or political factions for the interests of the nation, or that sacrifices democratic values in the name of security while thereby destroying the very thing it claims to defend, has fundamentally failed its constitutional purpose.

This policy therefore establishes both the capabilities and the constraints of Bangladesh's defense establishment: the capabilities that the strategic environment requires and the constraints that the constitutional order demands.

Part One: Strategic Principles

1.1 Bangladesh's defense policy is grounded in the constitutional principle that all powers in the Republic belong to the people, and that the armed forces of Bangladesh are the servants of the people, authorized by law, accountable to democratic institutions, and constrained in all their activities by the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

1.2 Bangladesh is committed to the peaceful resolution of all international disputes through negotiation, mediation, and the mechanisms of international law, and regards military force as an instrument of last resort to be employed only in genuine self-defense against armed attack or in support of duly authorized collective security action of the United Nations.

1.3 Bangladesh is committed to the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and the body of international humanitarian law that establishes the legal and ethical framework for the conduct of armed forces in all circumstances.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

1.4 Bangladesh's defense posture is defensive in character, aimed at deterring aggression through the credible demonstration of the capacity to impose unacceptable costs on any potential aggressor, and at building the international relationships and the institutional legitimacy that reduce the risk of aggression by eliminating its political rationale.

1.5 Bangladesh is committed to strategic autonomy: the maintenance of sufficient diversity in its external partnerships that Bangladesh's foreign and defense policy decisions are genuinely free expressions of its national interest rather than the product of external coercion or the leverage of over-dependence on any single partner.

Part Two: Threats and Challenges

2.1 Bangladesh's security environment is characterized by the following principal threats and challenges, the relative priority and specific manifestation of which will evolve over time and require continuous review.

2.2 Conventional military threat: while Bangladesh does not regard any specific state as its enemy, it must maintain the capacity to deter and if necessary resist conventional military force directed against its territorial integrity or sovereignty. The development and maintenance of this deterrent capability is a core defense priority.

2.3 Border security challenges: Bangladesh's borders, including its land borders with India and Myanmar and its maritime boundaries in the Bay of Bengal, face chronic challenges from armed non-state actors, irregular crossings, resource competition, and the spillover effects of regional conflicts. The management of these challenges requires a combination of military, border security, intelligence, and diplomatic instruments.

2.4 Maritime security: Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone of 118,813 square kilometers represents a resource and strategic asset of the highest importance whose protection requires a capable and adequately resourced naval force. The Bay of Bengal is increasingly a contested strategic space whose management requires both naval capability and active diplomatic engagement.

2.5 Gray zone and hybrid threats: Bangladesh faces threats in the space between conventional armed conflict and normal peacetime competition, including information operations, cyber attacks on critical infrastructure, economic coercion, and support to non-state actors as instruments of strategic pressure. Defending against these threats requires capabilities and institutional frameworks that extend well beyond the traditional military domain.

2.6 Internal security challenges: Bangladesh's internal security environment includes the complex dynamics of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the potential for political violence associated with the contested political environment, and the threat of radicalization in the face of poverty, inequality, and the manipulation of religious sentiment by extremist actors. The management of these internal challenges requires the consistent application of constitutional standards by all security forces, with impunity eradicated and accountability rigorously enforced.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Three: Defense Capability Objectives

3.1 Bangladesh's armed forces shall be developed and maintained at a capability level sufficient to: deter conventional military attack through a credible defensive deterrence posture; assert and defend Bangladesh's maritime sovereignty in the Exclusive Economic Zone; secure Bangladesh's land borders against armed incursion and criminal infiltration; conduct effective counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations within the constraints of international humanitarian law and constitutional rights protections; participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations at a level consistent with Bangladesh's international commitments and its armed forces' professional standards; and contribute to collective security arrangements in the Bay of Bengal region.

3.2 Defense capability development shall be guided by the principle of Sustainable Capability: that the level of military capability maintained must be affordable within Bangladesh's economic constraints without imposing opportunity costs on health, education, or other essential public expenditures that would themselves undermine national security in its broader dimensions.

3.3 Bangladesh shall develop its indigenous defense industrial base as a strategic priority, reducing its dependence on arms imports through the progressive development of domestic production capability, and insisting in all foreign defense procurement on meaningful technology transfer that builds this domestic capability.

Part Four: Democratic Defense Governance

4.1 The civilian executive, through the Prime Minister and Cabinet, exercises supreme authority over Bangladesh's armed forces, constrained by the Constitution and this Policy and accountable to Parliament for all defense policy decisions.

4.2 The Parliament of Bangladesh, through the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee and through the annual parliamentary approval of the defense budget, exercises democratic oversight of Bangladesh's defense establishment, with access to classified information under appropriate security arrangements.

4.3 Bangladesh's armed forces shall operate under a statutory legal framework, the National Defense Act and companion legislation, that specifies their authority, their accountability, and the rights and obligations of their members.

4.4 All security operations conducted by Bangladesh's armed forces shall be governed by the constitutional requirements of legality, proportionality, and respect for fundamental rights, and by the applicable provisions of international humanitarian law. Extrajudicial use of lethal force, arbitrary detention, torture, cruel and degrading treatment, and all forms of impunity for security force violations are absolutely prohibited.

4.5 Bangladesh's defense procurement shall be conducted through transparent, competitive, and accountable processes that eliminate corruption, ensure value for money, and serve the defense

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

capability objectives established by this Policy rather than the institutional or personal interests of procurement officials.

Part Five: International Engagement

5.1 Bangladesh shall pursue its defense objectives through active engagement in regional and international security institutions, including the United Nations, BIMSTEC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and the bilateral security frameworks that Bangladesh maintains with its partners.

5.2 Bangladesh shall calibrate its external defense partnerships to ensure strategic autonomy, maintaining cooperative relationships with multiple partners without developing the degree of dependence on any single partner that would allow that partner to exercise coercive leverage over Bangladesh's strategic decisions.

5.3 Bangladesh is committed to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to the comprehensive test ban treaty framework, and to the global arms control architecture that reduces the risk of catastrophic conflict.

5.4 Bangladesh's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations shall be maintained and developed as a core expression of Bangladesh's commitment to international peace and security and as a contribution to the rules-based international order from which Bangladesh itself benefits.

7.3 Draft Two: Defense White Paper Framework

BANGLADESH DEFENSE WHITE PAPER: FRAMEWORK OUTLINE

Note: A Defense White Paper is a public document presenting the government's defense policy in a form accessible to citizens, Parliament, and the international community. The following framework represents the structure and core content of such a document, to be elaborated through inter-ministry consultation, parliamentary review, and public consultation before adoption.

Section One: The Strategic Context

This section would present Bangladesh's strategic environment in analytical terms accessible to a non-specialist public, covering: the geographic foundations of Bangladesh's strategic situation; the principal bilateral relationships (India, Myanmar, China, and the United States) and their defense implications; the multilateral frameworks in which Bangladesh participates; the nature of the principal threats including conventional military threat, border security challenges, maritime security pressures, gray zone operations, and internal security dynamics; and the trends in the strategic environment that are most likely to shape Bangladesh's security challenges over the next decade.

Section Two: The Policy Framework

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

This section would present the National Defense Policy Statement in its parliamentary-adopted form, with explanatory commentary that makes its principles and objectives accessible and that explains the rationale for the key choices the Policy reflects.

Section Three: Force Structure and Capability

This section would present, in appropriately declassified form, an account of Bangladesh's current military forces, their organization, their capability levels, their principal equipment, and the trajectory of their development under the Forces Goal 2030 revised program. It would describe honestly the capability gaps that exist and the priority investments being made to address them, without disclosing specific operational vulnerabilities that would assist potential adversaries.

Section Four: Defense Budget and Resource Management

This section would present the defense budget framework, the principles governing resource allocation, the oversight mechanisms that ensure accountability, and the longer-term resource projections that defense capability planning requires. It would explain the trade-offs between military investment and other national priorities, and the sustainability principles that guide the capability development program.

Section Five: International Partnerships and Obligations

This section would describe Bangladesh's principal defense relationships, the content and character of existing security agreements, Bangladesh's international legal obligations in the defense domain, and the principles governing Bangladesh's approach to new partnership development.

Section Six: Defense Governance and Accountability

This section would describe the legal and institutional framework governing Bangladesh's defense establishment, the accountability mechanisms through which Parliament and the public can scrutinize defense policy, and the reform agenda being pursued to strengthen democratic defense governance.

7.4 Draft Three: National Defense Act - Preamble and Key Provisions

THE NATIONAL DEFENSE ACT, 2027

Preamble

An Act to establish the legal framework governing the Bangladesh Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Division, the defense intelligence agencies, and all forces under the command of the Ministry of Defence; to specify the constitutional authority, institutional structure, accountability mechanisms, and operational parameters of Bangladesh's defense establishment; to protect the fundamental rights of persons subject to military law and of civilians affected by military

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

operations; to establish the framework for parliamentary oversight of defense; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

WHEREAS the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh declares in Article 7 that all powers of the Republic belong to the people; and

WHEREAS the Constitution establishes in Article 21 that it is the duty of every citizen to defend Bangladesh; and

WHEREAS the protection of Bangladesh's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the fundamental rights of its citizens requires a competent, accountable, and constitutionally grounded defense establishment; and

WHEREAS the democratic governance of Bangladesh's defense establishment requires a comprehensive statutory framework establishing clear authority, accountability, and operational parameters;

NOW THEREFORE it is hereby enacted as follows:

Section 1: Preliminary

1(1) This Act shall be called the National Defense Act, 2027.

1(2) It shall extend to all persons subject to this Act within and outside the territory of Bangladesh.

1(3) It shall come into force on such date as the government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Section 2: Definitions

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

"Armed Forces" means the Bangladesh Army, the Bangladesh Navy, and the Bangladesh Air Force, collectively and individually.

"Armed Forces Division" means the coordinating body of the Armed Forces established under the Prime Minister's Secretariat with responsibility for joint operational planning, inter-service coordination, and policy advice to the government.

"Chief of Defence Staff" means the officer appointed under Section 12 of this Act as the principal military advisor to the government and the coordinating head of the Armed Forces Division.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

"Civilian Operational Authority" means the authority of the elected government, acting through the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and Minister of Defence, to direct the employment of the Armed Forces in accordance with the Constitution and this Act.

"Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee" means the committee established under Section 25 of this Act with oversight responsibility for the defense establishment.

"Rules of Engagement" means the directives issued by competent authority specifying the circumstances and limitations within which members of the Armed Forces may initiate or continue combat engagement.

Section 3: Constitutional Basis and Supremacy of Civilian Authority

3(1) The Armed Forces of Bangladesh are established for the defense of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, in service of its people and under the constitutional authority of the elected government of the Republic.

3(2) The civilian executive authority, represented by the Prime Minister and Cabinet, exercises supreme authority over the Armed Forces in accordance with the Constitution and this Act. No member of the Armed Forces may engage in any political activity in their capacity as a member of the Armed Forces, and no officer of the Armed Forces may take any action intended or likely to undermine the constitutional authority of the elected government.

3(3) The fundamental rights guaranteed by Part Three of the Constitution apply to all persons subject to this Act except to the extent that specific provisions of this Act impose lawful, proportionate, and necessary constraints consistent with the constitutional framework.

Section 4: Prohibition of Unlawful Force

4(1) No member of the Armed Forces shall engage in the use of lethal force except in accordance with the Rules of Engagement issued under this Act and in conformity with applicable international humanitarian law.

4(2) The extrajudicial use of lethal force, including the killing of any person while in the custody of the Armed Forces, is absolutely prohibited and constitutes a criminal offense under this Act, subject to prosecution in courts of competent jurisdiction, regardless of any order purporting to authorize such force.

4(3) Torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of any person by members of the Armed Forces is absolutely prohibited in accordance with Article 35 of the Constitution and the international legal obligations of Bangladesh, and constitutes a criminal offense under this Act.

Section 5: Parliamentary Approval for Combat Deployment

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

5(1) No member of the Armed Forces shall be deployed in a combat role outside the territory of Bangladesh without prior approval of the Parliament of Bangladesh, except as provided in subsections (2) and (3).

5(2) In an emergency requiring immediate defensive action against an armed attack on Bangladesh's territory, sovereignty, or forces, the Prime Minister may authorize deployment without prior parliamentary approval, but shall within forty-eight hours submit to Parliament a report on the deployment and seek parliamentary approval for its continuation.

5(3) Parliament may, by resolution, authorize the Prime Minister to deploy forces for specified purposes and duration without requiring approval of each individual deployment within the specified parameters.

Section 6: Intelligence Oversight

6(1) The defense intelligence agencies shall operate under a statutory framework established by the Intelligence Reform Act, which shall be enacted concurrently with this Act, specifying their authority, accountability, and the rights protections applicable to their operations.

6(2) The Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee established under Section 25 shall have oversight authority over the defense intelligence agencies, with access to all operations and the authority to require the production of all documents and records relevant to its oversight function.

6(3) An Intelligence Oversight Commissioner, appointed jointly by the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee for a non-renewable term of five years, shall conduct ongoing oversight of defense intelligence operations, receive and investigate complaints from persons aggrieved by intelligence operations, and report annually to Parliament on the exercise of intelligence authority.

Section 7: Defense Procurement

7(1) All major defense procurement, defined as procurement above the threshold value specified by the government by regulation on the advice of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee, shall be conducted through a statutory Defense Procurement Authority established by this Act.

7(2) The Defense Procurement Authority shall conduct all major procurement through open competitive processes, unless the government determines on security grounds that competition is not practicable for a specific procurement, in which case the Authority shall document the grounds for single-source procurement and report them to the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee within thirty days.

7(3) Bribery or corruption in connection with defense procurement constitutes an aggravated offense under the applicable penal legislation and shall be prosecuted with the priority and severity that the national security dimension of the harm requires.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Section 8: Rights of Military Personnel

8(1) Members of the Armed Forces shall have the right to legal representation in any court martial or disciplinary proceeding that may result in imprisonment, discharge, or reduction in rank.

8(2) Members of the Armed Forces shall have the right to appeal any punishment above a specified severity to an independent military appeals tribunal established under this Act.

8(3) Members of the Armed Forces shall have the right to make representations to the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee, through appropriate security-protected channels, about illegal orders, corruption, or systematic violations of this Act, without being subject to retaliation for making such representations in good faith.

7.5 Draft Four: Defense Procurement Policy Directive

BANGLADESH DEFENSE PROCUREMENT POLICY DIRECTIVE

Directive Number: MODEF-PROC-2027-001

Issued by: Ministry of Defence, People's Republic of Bangladesh

Authority: National Defense Act, 2027, Section 7

Part One: Purpose and Scope

1.1 This Directive establishes the policy framework for all defense procurement conducted by or on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, the Armed Forces Division, and the three services of the Bangladesh Armed Forces.

1.2 The Directive applies to all procurement of defense equipment, defense services, and defense-related infrastructure, above the threshold values specified in the Schedule to this Directive.

1.3 The fundamental objectives of Bangladesh's defense procurement policy are: to obtain the defense capabilities specified in the National Defense Policy at the best value consistent with capability, quality, and schedule requirements; to build Bangladesh's indigenous defense industrial base through technology transfer and co-production arrangements wherever these are available on appropriate terms; to conduct all procurement with absolute integrity, free from corruption, conflict of interest, or any other distortion of the procurement process; and to ensure democratic accountability through the transparency and parliamentary oversight mechanisms established by the National Defense Act.

Part Two: Procurement Principles

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

2.1 Competition: all major procurement shall be conducted through competitive processes that allow multiple suppliers to offer competing proposals. Single-source procurement shall only be authorized where competition is genuinely impracticable for documented technical, security, or strategic reasons, and shall in all such cases be reported to the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee within thirty days.

2.2 Capability-Based Specification: all procurement requirements shall be specified in terms of the capabilities required rather than the specific technical characteristics of any particular supplier's product, to enable genuine competition and to prevent the specification from being designed to favor a pre-selected supplier.

2.3 Technology Transfer: in all major procurement from foreign suppliers, Bangladesh shall negotiate to the maximum extent practicable for the inclusion of meaningful technology transfer, co-production, and indigenous capability development components that progressively reduce Bangladesh's dependence on imported defense equipment.

2.4 Integrity: all procurement officials, military and civilian, are subject to strict conflict of interest requirements, detailed in the Schedule to this Directive, prohibiting engagement in any procurement process in which they have a personal, family, or business interest in the outcome. Violations of these requirements shall be treated as criminal offenses under the National Defense Act.

2.5 Transparency: all procurement decisions above the threshold values specified in the Schedule shall be announced publicly, with the reasons for the selection decision documented in a form that can be made public without disclosing classified technical or security information. The full procurement file shall be available to the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee upon request.

Part Three: The Defense Procurement Authority

3.1 The Defense Procurement Authority is established as a statutory body under Section 7 of the National Defense Act, with responsibility for managing all major defense procurement processes in accordance with this Directive.

3.2 The Authority shall be headed by a Director General of Defense Procurement, appointed by the Cabinet on the joint recommendation of the Minister of Defence and the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee for a non-renewable term of five years, and removable only by Parliament on specified grounds.

3.3 The Authority shall include a multi-disciplinary staff with expertise in defense engineering, financial management, contract law, and the specific technology domains relevant to Bangladesh's capability requirements.

3.4 The Authority shall maintain a register of qualified defense suppliers, with criteria for qualification that are transparent, non-discriminatory, and based on technical and financial capability rather than on political or other non-merit considerations.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Part Four: The Indigenous Defense Industry

4.1 Bangladesh's indigenous defense industry, including the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory, the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory, the indigenous shipbuilding capabilities at Khulna Shipyard, Dockyard and Engineering Works, and Chittagong Dry Dock, and any future indigenous defense production facilities, shall receive preference in procurement decisions where indigenous products are available at comparable quality and at a price premium not exceeding the percentage specified in the Schedule.

4.2 All major foreign procurement shall include a local content requirement, the percentage of which shall be negotiated on a case-by-case basis but shall not be less than the minimum specified in the Schedule, to be delivered through sub-contracting to indigenous defense industry suppliers or through joint production arrangements.

7.6 Draft Five: Bangladesh Defense Doctrine Statement

BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES: CAPSTONE DOCTRINE

Publication Date: 2027

Classification: Unclassified

Chapter One: The Purpose of the Bangladesh Armed Forces

The Bangladesh Armed Forces exist to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, to protect the fundamental rights and security of its people, and to contribute to regional and international peace and security in accordance with Bangladesh's constitutional principles and international legal obligations.

The Armed Forces are servants of the people of Bangladesh, constituted under the authority of the Constitution and the National Defense Act, and accountable to the democratically elected government and, through it, to Parliament and the people. This constitutional service relationship is not a constraint on military effectiveness: it is its foundation. An armed force that genuinely serves its people's security, within a framework of democratic accountability and constitutional constraint, is a more effective instrument of national defense than one that operates as an autonomous institution insulated from democratic scrutiny.

Chapter Two: The Strategic Concept - Calibrated Deterrence

Bangladesh's military strategy is founded on the principle of Calibrated Deterrence: the maintenance of a defensive military posture capable of imposing sufficient costs on any potential aggressor to make aggression against Bangladesh strategically irrational, combined with the active diplomatic engagement and the cultivation of international relationships that reduce the political rationale for such aggression.

Calibrated Deterrence has four operational principles:

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

First: Denial Capability. The Armed Forces maintain the capacity to deny any aggressor a rapid and cheap military victory against Bangladesh, through defensive capability in depth across the land, maritime, and air domains, that ensures the cost of any military aggression is substantially higher than any anticipated benefit.

Second: Cost Imposition. The Armed Forces maintain asymmetric capabilities designed to impose costs on a more powerful aggressor disproportionate to those that symmetric force comparison would suggest, through naval mine warfare, coastal defense missile systems, special operations capability, and the terrain and logistics advantages of territorial defense.

Third: Diplomatic Amplification. Military deterrence is reinforced and amplified by Bangladesh's diplomatic relationships, which create additional costs for aggression in the form of international political and economic consequences that the military deterrent alone cannot generate.

Fourth: Societal Resilience. The most fundamental form of deterrence is the demonstration that Bangladesh's society is sufficiently resilient, sufficiently unified, and sufficiently committed to its own defense that any aggressor would face not merely military resistance but the determined resistance of an entire mobilized people. This societal dimension of deterrence requires that defense policy genuinely serves the people's security rather than any factional interest: a population that trusts and values its defense institutions is the most powerful deterrent of all.

Chapter Three: The Operational Framework

The operational framework of the Bangladesh Armed Forces is organized around three operational contexts: Peacetime Deterrence and Defense Readiness; Crisis Management and Response; and, if deterrence fails, Defense Operations.

In Peacetime Deterrence and Defense Readiness, the Armed Forces conduct the full range of training, exercising, intelligence collection, force development, and international engagement activities that maintain their deterrent capability and readiness for crisis response. This operational context includes the conduct of bilateral and multilateral exercises with partner states, the development of joint operational doctrine and procedures, and the maintenance of the intelligence systems that provide early warning of developing threats.

In Crisis Management and Response, the Armed Forces provide the military options that the civilian government requires to manage crisis situations ranging from border incidents through natural disaster response through terrorist attacks to sub-conventional armed incursions. In this operational context, the Armed Forces operate in close coordination with civilian agencies and under direct civilian direction, providing military capability in support of political objectives determined by the government.

In Defense Operations, if deterrence has failed and Bangladesh faces a genuine armed attack, the Armed Forces conduct defensive operations aimed at denying the aggressor's objectives, imposing costs sufficient to compel the cessation of aggression, and creating the conditions for diplomatic resolution of the conflict. In this operational context, the Armed Forces exercise the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

full range of their combat capability within the constraints of applicable international humanitarian law and the Rules of Engagement issued under the National Defense Act.

Chapter Four: Joint Operations and Inter-Service Integration

Modern warfare requires the integration of capabilities across all military domains: land, sea, air, cyber, and the information environment. The Bangladesh Armed Forces are organized for joint operations through the Armed Forces Division, which coordinates the operational planning, logistics, and command and control of all three services. The proposed Joint Special Operations Command represents the most advanced expression of this joint operational philosophy: a centralized command structure integrating the special operations forces of all three services for the most demanding operational tasks.

Joint operations require common doctrine, compatible communications and information systems, and a command culture that values inter-service coordination over single-service autonomy. The development of this joint culture is a priority of the professional military education reforms outlined in the national defense policy framework, and is supported by the regular joint exercises including the Tiger Lightning drills and similar multi-service training events that develop practical inter-service interoperability.

Chapter Five: Rules of Engagement and the Law of Armed Conflict

Every member of the Bangladesh Armed Forces operates under Rules of Engagement that specify the circumstances and limitations within which military force may be applied. These Rules of Engagement are derived from the applicable provisions of international humanitarian law, the constitutional requirements of Bangladesh law, and the specific political and strategic context of each operational situation.

The cardinal principles of the Law of Armed Conflict that every member of the Armed Forces must understand and apply are: military necessity (force may only be used for genuinely military purposes); distinction (combatants must at all times distinguish between those who are participating in armed conflict and those who are not, and may only direct attacks against the former); proportionality (the anticipated civilian harm from any attack must not be excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage); and precaution (all feasible precautions must be taken to minimize civilian harm).

These principles apply in all operational contexts, including peacekeeping operations, counter-terrorism operations, and internal security operations. They are not discretionary: they are legally binding on every member of the Armed Forces, and violations constitute criminal offenses prosecutable under the National Defense Act.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE GLOBAL DIPLOMATIC FRAMEWORK - BANGLADESH IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

8.1 The Multilateral Architecture and Bangladesh's Strategic Position

Bangladesh's approach to international security must be understood within the framework of the multilateral order that has been constructed over the eight decades since the United Nations was founded in 1945 and that is now under unprecedented stress. The rules-based international order, centered on the UN Charter, international law, and the multilateral institutions created to implement them, has been Bangladesh's primary structural asset: a small, poor, densely populated state with no significant military power can nonetheless secure its interests through the effective mobilization of international law, multilateral institutions, and the coalitions of states that share its interest in a world governed by rules rather than raw power.

Bangladesh's most dramatic demonstration of the value of this multilateral order was the maritime boundary arbitration process that, through two separate international tribunals, established Bangladesh's rights in the Bay of Bengal against both Myanmar (2012) and India (2014) in terms that overwhelmingly favored Bangladesh's legal arguments. No military force that Bangladesh could conceivably maintain would have produced the outcome that international law, expertly deployed, achieved. This experience provides the empirical foundation for the philosophical claim that diplomatic primacy is not merely a normative aspiration but a strategically rational choice for a state in Bangladesh's position.

The stress on the multilateral order that is now visible in the aggressive unilateralism of the major powers, the erosion of the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement function, the Security Council paralysis produced by great power competition, and the challenges to international humanitarian law from states that conduct military operations with callous disregard for civilian life, all create a more difficult environment for Bangladesh's multilateral strategy. But they do not negate it. Even a stressed multilateral order provides more protection for Bangladesh's interests than its alternative: a purely power-political world in which only military and economic strength count.

8.2 The Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework and Bangladesh's Positioning

The Indo-Pacific concept, which has emerged over the past decade as the dominant geographic framework for strategic thinking about the arc from the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific, places Bangladesh at a point of considerable strategic interest: at the junction of the Indian Ocean and the approaches to the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh's geographic position makes it relevant to every major power's Indo-Pacific strategic calculus. India's SAGAR initiative explicitly includes Bangladesh within its "Security and Growth for All in the Region" framework. China's Belt and Road initiative has made Bangladesh one of its most significant South Asian investment destinations. The United States' Indo-Pacific strategy, operationalized through the Indo-Pacific Command and the emerging framework of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad, composed of the United States, Japan, Australia, and India), has Bangladesh

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

on the periphery of its most intense focus but within the broader region of its strategic concern. The conclusion of the Tiger Shark military exercises in August 2025 and the signing of the defense equipment transfer agreement with Japan in February 2026 represent the tangible manifestation of this American and Japanese interest in Bangladesh's strategic alignment.

Bangladesh's appropriate response to this multi-sided engagement, each dimension of which carries both opportunities and risks, is the Strategic Autonomy framework developed in Chapter Five. The specific operational expression of this framework in the Indo-Pacific context is: full participation in the multilateral governance institutions of the Indian Ocean region, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and BIMSTEC, in ways that advance Bangladesh's maritime security interests and its economic integration into the regional economy; selective engagement with security cooperation frameworks, including the Tiger Shark exercises with the United States, that build operational capability and interoperability without committing Bangladesh to any alliance framework that would require it to take sides in great power competition; refusal to join any exclusive security architecture that would position Bangladesh as an adversary of any of its major partners; and consistent public affirmation of Bangladesh's commitment to the rules-based international order, including freedom of navigation, the peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, and the principles of international humanitarian law.

8.3 The BIMSTEC Framework: Bangladesh's Most Promising Regional Architecture

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, represents the most promising multilateral framework for addressing Bangladesh's specific regional security challenges. Its advantage over SAARC is that it excludes Pakistan, which has historically blocked SAARC's security agenda by insisting that bilateral India-Pakistan tensions be resolved before regional cooperation can proceed. Its advantage over bilateral relationships is that it provides a multilateral context in which Bangladesh's concerns can be amplified by the shared interests of multiple states.

The BIMSTEC security agenda, which has been developing gradually since the framework's establishment in 1997 but has not yet reached its potential, includes counter-terrorism cooperation, maritime security collaboration, counter-trafficking arrangements, and the management of cross-border criminal networks. For Bangladesh, the most immediately valuable dimension of an enhanced BIMSTEC security agenda would be a regional mechanism for managing the spillover effects of the Myanmar civil war, coordinating the humanitarian response to the Rohingya crisis, and developing a collective diplomatic approach to the Arakan Army's de facto governance of Rakhine State that is more effective than the current bilateral approaches of each affected state.

The institutional development of BIMSTEC's security dimension is a diplomatic priority that Bangladesh is particularly well-positioned to champion: as one of the organization's founding members, as the state most directly affected by the Myanmar crisis, and as a state with the diplomatic credibility that its peacekeeping engagement and its adherence to the rules-based

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

order generates, Bangladesh can provide the leadership that BIMSTEC's security agenda currently lacks.

8.4 The Ganges Waters Treaty: A Defense Issue by Another Name

The expiration of the 1996 Ganges Waters Treaty in December 2026 represents perhaps the single most immediate and consequential diplomatic challenge on Bangladesh's agenda in the current period. This is categorized in this chapter as a defense issue not because water-sharing is conventionally understood as a military matter but because this textbook has consistently argued that economic security, of which food security is a component, is a dimension of national security as fundamental as military defense. The Ganga treaty governs the dry-season allocation of water flows to Bangladesh's northern agricultural districts, and the failure to reach a satisfactory renegotiation would constitute a genuine threat to the food security and agricultural livelihoods of millions of Bangladeshis.

The renegotiation context is uniquely challenging. India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack of April 2025 has introduced the concept of water as a strategic instrument into the South Asian diplomatic environment in a way that has generated deep anxiety in Bangladesh about its own water treaty. India's latest reported demands for additional Kolkata Port Trust canal allocations add material substance to this anxiety. The political environment in both countries, with India's elections in Assam and West Bengal scheduled for March and April 2026 creating domestic pressures on the Indian side, and Bangladesh's new BNP government establishing its external relations from a starting point of significant India-skepticism in its domestic political base, makes the diplomatic environment for treaty negotiation particularly challenging.

Bangladesh's negotiating strategy for the Ganga treaty renegotiation must integrate several dimensions: the technical hydrological analysis of the actual river flows and the downstream consequences of different allocation scenarios; the legal analysis of Bangladesh's rights under international water law, which has been progressively developed since the Ganga treaty was originally signed and now provides a more robust legal framework for Bangladesh's claims; the diplomatic engagement of third parties including China (whose upstream activities on the Brahmaputra create separate water concerns for both India and Bangladesh but who has an interest in maintaining its relationship with Bangladesh), the United States, and the international community more broadly, to create political weight behind Bangladesh's negotiating position; and the domestic political management of the negotiation, which will face intense scrutiny from a Bangladeshi public sensitized by the India tensions of 2024 and 2025.

The defense establishment's role in the water treaty context is primarily in the provision of intelligence and strategic analysis, and in ensuring that the military dimension of Bangladesh's relationship with India does not complicate the diplomatic negotiations. The Ganga treaty is fundamentally a diplomatic matter, but the diplomatic environment in which it will be negotiated is shaped by the military relationship, and any deterioration of that military relationship would immediately damage Bangladesh's negotiating leverage.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

CHAPTER NINE: BENCHMARKS AND THE DECADE OF DEMOCRATIC DEFENSE GOVERNANCE, 2026 TO 2036

9.1 The Case for Measurable Benchmarks

Every policy statement, however philosophically sophisticated and institutionally detailed, is ultimately assessed against outcomes. The philosophical synthesis offered in this part is not immune to this requirement: it must be translatable into observable and measurable changes in Bangladesh's defense governance, capability, and accountability that can serve as the basis for assessing whether the program it recommends is actually being implemented. This chapter therefore provides specific, time-bound, observable benchmarks against which the implementation of the framework developed throughout this textbook should be assessed.

The benchmarks are organized in three temporal tiers: immediate priorities for the period 2026 to 2028, representing the actions that the new elected government must take in its first term if the reform agenda is to achieve genuine momentum; medium-term development targets for the period 2028 to 2032, representing the institutional developments that the first tier's legislative and organizational actions should produce; and long-term transformation indicators for the period 2032 to 2036, representing the broader cultural and capability changes that the entire reform agenda aims to achieve.

9.2 Immediate Priorities: 2026 to 2028

In the legal and legislative domain, the following benchmarks should be achieved by the end of 2028: the National Defense Act should be enacted in full, with all its companion legislation, following a minimum six-month public consultation process; the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee should be constituted with security-cleared members and an established research support unit; the Defense Procurement Authority should be operationally established with its Director General appointed and its initial procurement processes under management; the Intelligence Oversight Commissioner should be appointed and the Intelligence Oversight Commissioner's Office established with adequate staffing; and Bangladesh's first Defense White Paper should be published in both classified and unclassified form following parliamentary adoption of the National Defense Policy Statement.

In the civil-military relations domain, the following benchmarks should be achieved by the end of 2028: the Armed Forces Division should be reformed to create genuine joint operational planning capacity with civilian participation in strategic planning processes; the Chief of Defence Staff position should be formally established with its statutory mandate; a National Security Council with effective inter-agency coordination should be established with a permanently staffed secretariat; and the first annual Defense Review should be presented to Parliament in the format specified by the Defense Budget Transparency Act.

In the capability development domain, the following benchmarks should be achieved by the end of 2028: a replacement air combat platform decision should have been made, with a procurement

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

process meeting the transparency and competition standards of the Defense Procurement Policy Directive; the Bangladesh-Japan defense equipment transfer framework should have been developed into a specific capability cooperation program; the Force Goal 2030 revised program should have been formally reviewed and published in summary form with clear capability priorities and resource allocation principles; and the Joint Special Operations Command should have been formally established with its initial operational capability declared.

9.3 Medium-Term Development Targets: 2028 to 2032

By 2032, the institutional changes initiated in the first two years should have produced observable institutional development. In the legislative domain: the National Defense Act should have been subjected to its first statutory review, with any necessary amendments identified through this review enacted; the Intelligence Reform Act's implementation should have been independently assessed, with any deficiencies identified and rectified; and the Defense Procurement Authority should have completed at least five major procurement processes under its new framework, with an independent assessment of their integrity and efficiency completed and published.

In the educational and cultural domain: the Bangladesh National Defence University should be established and operational, offering its initial graduate programs with a civilian student cohort alongside military students; the Defense Research Institute should be established and have published its first independent research reports; and the Parliamentary Research Service's defense and security function should be staffed and producing regular research support for the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee's oversight work.

In the capability domain: the indigenous defense industrial program should have completed the initial Chittagong ordnance factory, with production of specified calibers of artillery ammunition operational; the naval multirole guided missile frigate program should be at the sea trials stage for its first vessel; and the air combat platform replacement decision should have been implemented with initial deliveries completed and operational conversion training underway.

9.4 Long-Term Transformation Indicators: 2032 to 2036

By 2036, if the program recommended in this textbook has been implemented with sustained political will, the following transformation should be observable. In the governance domain: Bangladesh should have a demonstrated track record of democratic accountability for defense policy, with genuine parliamentary oversight exercised through the reformed committee structure, independent audit findings acted upon, and at least one significant instance of legislative scrutiny having materially affected a major procurement or operational decision. The armed forces should have a demonstrably reformed institutional culture in which democratic accountability is not resisted as an external imposition but accepted as a professional norm.

In the strategic domain: Bangladesh should have articulated, and consistently implemented, the Grand Strategy Framework developed in Chapter Five, with measurable progress on the diversification of external partnerships, the sustainable development of indigenous defense industry, and the diplomatic cultivation of the regional frameworks, especially BIMSTEC, that

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

serve Bangladesh's security interests. Bangladesh's participation in UN peacekeeping should have been maintained at its historically high level with a demonstrably enhanced standard of training, doctrine, and accountability that preserves Bangladesh's international reputation in this domain.

In the human rights domain: the pattern of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and security force impunity that characterized the Hasina period should have been definitively broken, with accountability for past abuses established through legitimate legal processes and a robust institutional framework of oversight and accountability in place that makes the recurrence of systematic abuse structurally improbable. This is perhaps the most important long-term transformation indicator, because it is the foundation on which Bangladesh's claim to be a democratic state committed to the rule of law ultimately rests.

CHAPTER TEN: THE ENDURING QUESTIONS - PHILOSOPHICAL CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Questions That Policy Cannot Finally Resolve

The final chapter of a comprehensive textbook on defense policy should not pretend to have resolved the enduring tensions that animate the subject. Part One of this textbook opened with the observation that defense policy is a living, contested, philosophically charged, legally constrained, politically shaped, and geographically determined enterprise. Nothing in the fifteen parts that followed has made that observation less true, and this final chapter honors the commitment made in that foreword by engaging directly with the enduring questions that the most sophisticated defense policy framework cannot finally answer.

The Question of Force and Justice

The first enduring question is whether organized lethal force can ever be genuinely just, or whether the use of state violence, however legally authorized and carefully constrained, is always a moral tragedy to be minimized rather than a legitimate instrument to be celebrated. The just war tradition answers yes: some uses of force are more just than others, and the framework of conditions it establishes is not merely rhetorical but constitutes a genuine, if imperfect, attempt to distinguish between legitimate defense and aggression. The pacifist tradition answers no: the institutionalization of organized killing, however hedged with legal and moral constraints, always degrades the moral community that tolerates it.

Bangladesh's own history provides material for both answers. The liberation war of 1971 seems to most people to be one of the clearest cases in the historical record of a people taking up arms in genuinely just self-defense: the atrocities of the Pakistani military against the Bengali population were of a character that made resistance a moral imperative, and the independence that resulted was a genuine liberation rather than merely a power transfer. But the same history also provides examples of the way in which the institutionalization of organized violence, once

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

established for genuine defensive purposes, tends to expand its scope: the coups, the political violence, the extrajudicial killings, the detention without trial, that marked Bangladesh's post-independence decades are all, in different ways, manifestations of the moral corruption that the institutionalization of lethal force tends to produce.

The synthesis offered here is not a resolution of this tension but an insistence that it be kept alive in the consciousness of defense policy makers. A defense establishment that has lost its awareness of the moral weight of the violence it is organized to conduct, that treats the use of lethal force as a purely technical matter governed entirely by operational efficiency, has already crossed the line from professional military service into institutional violence unconstrained by moral conscience. The institutions proposed throughout this textbook, the legal frameworks, the oversight mechanisms, the educational programs that ground military professionals in the ethics of force, are all designed to keep this moral awareness alive as an institutional fact rather than a merely individual aspiration.

The Question of Security and Liberty

The second enduring question is whether there is any arrangement of political institutions that can permanently reconcile the claims of security and liberty, or whether every institutional arrangement inevitably produces periodic crises in which the two values come into genuine conflict and one must be sacrificed, at least partially, for the other. The liberal tradition of Locke and Mill insists that the conflict is ultimately resolvable: that constitutionally constrained, democratically accountable security institutions can provide adequate security without systematically violating liberty. The realist tradition of Hobbes and Schmitt insists that the conflict is permanent: that security always requires the concentration of power and the suspension of normal rules that are constitutionally incompatible with liberty.

Bangladesh's experience suggests a more nuanced answer than either the liberal optimist or the realist pessimist provides. The most dangerous moments in Bangladesh's security history have not been moments of too much liberty and too little security: they have been moments of too little of both, when the security establishment, freed from democratic accountability, has proven simultaneously willing to violate liberty and incapable of providing genuine security. The 2007 to 2008 emergency was a case in point: it suspended constitutional processes in the name of security while producing a political crisis that was itself a security threat, and it violated citizens' rights without achieving any of the security improvements it promised. The Hasina period's systematic use of security law against political opponents produced a security establishment that was politically compromised, institutionally corrupted, and ultimately incapable of providing the security that would have given its repression a consequentialist defense.

The positive case, that democratic accountability and constitutional constraint actually produce more effective security institutions, is not merely theoretical: it is grounded in the empirical record of those states that have built effective security institutions within democratic frameworks over the long term. Finland, South Korea, Australia, and the other comparative cases that this textbook has invoked throughout are not perfect democracies with perfect security records, but they demonstrate that the liberal project is achievable and that its achievement produces security

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

institutions that are genuinely more effective, over the long term, than their authoritarian alternatives.

The Question of Sovereignty and Interdependence

The third enduring question is whether Bangladesh can maintain genuine sovereignty in a world of deep interdependence, or whether the logic of economic integration, great power competition, and global security governance inevitably reduces the sovereignty of small and medium states to a formal shell without substantive content. Dependency theorists would answer that sovereignty for states in Bangladesh's structural position is always conditional on the tolerance of more powerful states, and that the formal legal equality of states in international law merely masks this substantive inequality. Constructivists would answer that sovereignty is not a fixed quantity but a social practice: that states construct their sovereignty through the norms, institutions, and relationships they cultivate, and that Bangladesh's sovereignty is as genuine and as contestable as any other state's.

The pragmatic synthesis offered here is that sovereignty is not an all-or-nothing attribute but a capability that is more or less fully exercised depending on the institutional, diplomatic, and economic resources that a state can bring to bear. Bangladesh's sovereignty is real: its government makes genuinely consequential decisions about its own affairs, and external powers can influence but cannot simply override those decisions without incurring costs that constrain their behavior. But Bangladesh's sovereignty is also constrained: by its economic dependencies, by its geographic situation, by its security vulnerabilities, and by the asymmetric power relationships that structure its engagement with larger neighbors and great powers.

The Grand Strategy Framework proposed in this textbook is ultimately an argument about how to maximize the substantive content of Bangladesh's sovereignty within the structural constraints it cannot change: by building the institutions, the capabilities, the partnerships, and the economic resilience that allow Bangladesh's government to make genuinely free choices about matters that are truly in Bangladesh's national interest, rather than choices driven by dependence, vulnerability, or external manipulation.

The Question of Democratic Defense in an Age of Existential Threats

The fourth and final enduring question is whether democracy, with its requirements of transparency, accountability, deliberation, and consent, is compatible with the demands that the most serious security threats impose: threats that require rapid decision, classified information, and the kind of concentrated executive authority that democratic processes are specifically designed to constrain. This question has been posed with greatest force by theorists of exceptional politics, from Carl Schmitt's analysis of the state of exception to contemporary debates about executive power in counter-terrorism policy, and it has been answered in both directions: by those who argue that security emergencies require temporary suspensions of democratic governance, and by those who argue that the suspension of democratic governance in the name of security is itself the most dangerous threat to the political community.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

The answer this textbook offers is a qualified but firm defense of democratic governance even under the most severe security pressures: qualified because it acknowledges that genuine security emergencies may require temporarily compressed decision-making processes, and firm because it insists that these compressed processes must remain within constitutional frameworks and subject to post-facto accountability rather than permanently suspending democratic oversight. The legislative architecture proposed in Chapter Three, with its emergency exception for immediate defensive action combined with mandatory forty-eight-hour parliamentary notification, represents this balance: fast enough to respond to genuine emergencies, accountable enough to prevent the emergency exception from becoming the permanent rule.

The historical record provides strong support for this position. The democracies that have best preserved both their security and their democratic values in the face of genuine existential threats, Finland against the Soviet Union, Israel in its decades of regional conflict, South Korea under the ongoing threat from the north, have been those that maintained the substantive content of democratic governance even under the most severe pressures, rather than trading democratic institutions for security outcomes that proved illusory.

10.2 The Liberation's Unfinished Promise

This textbook began with the July Revolution of 2024, and it is appropriate that this final chapter return to it. The students and citizens who filled the streets of Dhaka and the other cities of Bangladesh in the summer of 2024, who faced the violence of the security forces, who died in numbers that remain contested but were undeniably significant, who brought down a government that had come to embody the worst of what defense policy can become, a security apparatus without accountability, used for political repression rather than genuine national defense, funded by citizens whose interests it demonstrably did not serve, were acting in a tradition as old as Bangladesh itself.

The tradition they were acting in is the tradition of 1971: the tradition that holds that the people of Bangladesh have the right to determine their own affairs, that the state exists to serve the people rather than the people to serve the state, and that when the state's security apparatus is turned against the people, resistance is not merely a right but an obligation. This is the constitutional vision that Article 7 expresses and that every subsequent democratic struggle in Bangladesh has sought to realize.

The defense policy framework developed in this textbook is ultimately in service of that vision. Every institutional proposal, every legislative draft, every doctrinal principle, every educational recommendation, every diplomatic framework, is oriented toward the realization of a defense policy that genuinely serves the people of Bangladesh: that protects their territory without terrorizing them, that uses their resources efficiently and accountably, that contributes to a regional and international environment conducive to their development and security, and that maintains the constitutional values of democracy, human dignity, and the rule of law that are the ultimate expression of what Bangladesh is defending.

This vision is not naive: it does not underestimate the difficulty of the institutional transformations it requires, the persistence of the structural obstacles it must overcome, or the

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

genuine security threats that make some degree of military capacity genuinely necessary. But it insists, on philosophical grounds that are themselves grounded in the historical experience of democratic states that have built effective security institutions within constitutional frameworks, that the vision is achievable. Finland built a defense capacity that deterred Soviet aggression. South Korea built a military that secured its democratic development. Australia built a defense establishment that is both militarily capable and democratically accountable. None of these achievements was accomplished without difficulty, without setbacks, without the periodic reassertion of democratic authority against institutional resistance. But all of them were accomplished.

Bangladesh can accomplish the same. The intellectual foundations laid in sixteen parts of this textbook, the legislative architecture proposed in dozens of draft provisions, the doctrinal frameworks developed across multiple chapters, the institutional reforms recommended throughout: all of these are available to the generation of Bangladeshi leaders, civilian and military, who have the political will to use them.

The liberation of 1971 liberated Bangladesh from colonial subjugation. The democratic aspirations of 2024 seek to liberate Bangladesh from the internal subjugation of an unaccountable security state. The defense policy vision of 2026 and beyond seeks to complete both liberations: to build a Bangladesh that is secure against external threats and free from internal oppression, that defends its sovereignty through democratic legitimacy as well as military capability, and that contributes to a regional and international order in which the rule of law, rather than the rule of force, provides the ultimate foundation of security for all.

That is what the liberation demanded. That is what the Constitution promises. That is what this textbook has, in sixteen parts, tried to show is possible. The work of making it real belongs to the Bangladeshi people and their democratic representatives. May they approach it with the seriousness, the courage, and the vision that the task requires.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING FOR PART SIXTEEN

Philosophy of Security and Defense

Booth, Ken. Theory of World Security. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Brands, Hal. What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Buzan, Barry. People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era. Second edition. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. Translated and edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Doyle, Michael. Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism. New York: Norton, 1997.

Dworkin, Ronald. Law's Empire. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Fuller, Lon. The Morality of Law. Revised edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.

Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Kelsen, Hans. Pure Theory of Law. Translated by Max Knight. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Kennedy, Paul. The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000. New York: Random House, 1987.

Liddell Hart, B.H. Strategy: The Indirect Approach. London: Faber, 1967.

Locke, John. Two Treatises of Government. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660 to 1783. Boston: Little, Brown, 1890.

Rawls, John. The Law of Peoples. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Schelling, Thomas. Arms and Influence. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Schmitt, Michael, editor. Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Walzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations. Fifth edition. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

International Law and Defense

Brownlie, Ian. Principles of Public International Law. Eighth edition, edited by James Crawford. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Cassese, Antonio. International Law. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Crawford, James. Brownlie's Principles of Public International Law. Eighth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Melzer, Nils. International Humanitarian Law: A Comprehensive Introduction. Geneva: ICRC, 2019.

Schmitt, Michael. Essays on Law and War at the Fault Lines. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2012.

Bangladesh Defense and Strategic Affairs, 2024 to 2026

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. Security Sector Reform in Bangladesh: Post-Revolution Perspectives. Dhaka: BIPSS, January 2026.

Bangladesh Military Forces. Bangladesh's $75 Billion Defence Modernisation Proposal 2026 to 2040: Strategic Posture, Procurement Strategy, and the Future of Tri-Service Capability. Dhaka: BDMilitary, June 2025.

Bangladesh Military Forces. Forces Goal 2030: Revised Implementation Framework Post-2024. Dhaka: BDMilitary, December 2025.

Bangladesh Military Forces. Ideal Defence Policy for Bangladesh by 2040. Dhaka: BDMilitary, April 2025.

Crisis Group Asia. After the Golden Era: Getting Bangladesh-India Ties Back on Track. Report 353. Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 2025.

Dhaka Tribune. Bangladesh Air Force Signs Letter of Intent with Leonardo for Eurofighter Typhoon. Dhaka: December 2025.

Dipu, Ahmad M. Rethinking Bangladesh's National Defense Policy in the Wake of the Students-People's Uprising. SSRN Working Paper 5584990. November 2025.

The Diplomat. Bangladesh-India Relations Are Back on the Brink. December 2025.

The Diplomat. Is the Ice Finally Breaking in Bangladesh-India Relations? March 2026.

The Diplomat. Revisiting Forces Goal 2030: Bangladesh's Military Modernization Plan Under the New Government. December 2024.

Drishti IAS. India-Bangladesh Ties Under Strategic Recalibration. New Delhi: January 2026.

ORF Online. Deciphering Dhaka's Diversifying Defence Inventory and Partnerships. New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, September 2025.

South Asian Voices. Can India and Bangladesh Clear the Slate a Year after Hasina? August 2025.

Wikipedia. Forces Goal 2030. Updated February 2026.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Civil-Military Relations and Democratic Defense Governance

Desch, Michael. Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Diamond, Larry and Marc Plattner, editors. Civil-Military Relations and Democracy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Feaver, Peter. Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Huntington, Samuel. The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Janowitz, Morris. The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait. New York: Free Press, 1960.

Pion-Berlin, David, editor. Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

Staniland, Paul. Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Comparative Small State Security

Bailes, Alyson J.K. and Gunnar Palsson. Iceland and the Security Environment. Reykjavik: Icelandic Centre for Security and International Affairs, 2008.

Bergmann, Eirikur. Nordic Nationalism and Right-Wing Populist Politics: Imperial Relationships and National Sentiments. London: Palgrave, 2017.

Johansson, Rolf. Total Defence in Transition. Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2019.

Lele, Ajey. Asian Space Race: Rhetoric or Reality? Singapore: Springer, 2013.

Maass, Matthias. Small States in World Politics: The Story of Small State Survival. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

Mares, David. Violent Peace: Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Water Security and Environmental Dimensions

Gleick, Peter. The World's Water 2024: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources. Washington: Pacific Institute, 2024.

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Salman, Salman M.A. The Helsinki Rules, the UN Watercourses Convention and the Berlin Rules: Perspectives on International Water Law. Water Resources Development, 2007.

Wolf, Aaron. Shared Waters: Conflict and Cooperation. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 2007.

Grand Strategy and Strategic Culture

Gray, Colin. The Future of Strategy. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015.

Ikenberry, G. John. A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Posen, Barry. Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Snyder, Jack. Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

End of Part Sixteen

This concludes the sixteen-part textbook: Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures, and Frameworks. The complete work encompasses the philosophical foundations of defense theory in Part One; the historical evolution of Bangladesh's security environment in Part Two; the constitutional and legislative framework of defense governance in Part Three; the geopolitical analysis of Bangladesh's strategic position in Part Four; the civil-military relations architecture in Part Five; the intelligence governance framework in Part Six; the maritime strategy in Part Seven; the internal security dimensions in Part Eight; the peacekeeping and international security engagement in Part Nine; the defense industrial and procurement framework in Part Ten; the fiscal and budget analysis in Part Eleven; the comparative case studies in Part Twelve; the comprehensive legislative architecture in Part Thirteen; the operational doctrine in Part Fourteen; the defense education ecosystem in Part Fifteen; and the philosophical synthesis, grand strategy framework, complete legislative drafts, and final normative assessment in Part Sixteen.

The textbook is offered to the academic, legislative, policy, and defense professional communities of Bangladesh as a contribution to the intellectual and institutional project of building a defense policy worthy of the liberation that created this nation and the democratic aspirations that continue to animate it.

First Edition, 2026

Index

(Part.Chapter style. Ex.: 11.2 = Part Eleven, Chapter Two)

A

Accountability

democratic accountability and defense, 9.3, 14.1, 16.3

in internal security operations, 11.1-11.3

military justice and, 4.1-4.3

parliamentary oversight of defense, 14.1-14.3

procurement accountability framework, 6.1-6.3, 8.1-8.3

ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) , 14.2

draft negotiating framework, 5.2

strategic implications, 4.2, 14.2

Aid to civil power doctrine , 6.1-6.2, 5.2

Air defense policy , 5.2, 6.2, 14.2

draft framework, 15.2

integrated air defense, 12.1

SIPER system acquisition, 5.3, 3.2

Air power theory , 5.1

Alliance management , 8.2, 14.1-14.4

Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 , 5.3, 10.3, 11.3

Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) , 4.1, 4.2

Arakan Army , 3.3, 4.4, 10.2

border security implications, 3.2, 3.4

drone warfare capabilities, 7.2

strategic challenge for Bangladesh, 3.2, 13.2

Armed Forces Division (AFD) , 3.3, 8.1, 9.1

Army Act of 1952 , 5.3, 15.1, 2.1-2.4

proposed amendments, 2.3

Army Welfare Trust , 3.1, 3.3

Artificial intelligence in defense , 11.1-11.6

Bangladesh National AI Strategy, 11.4

decision support vs. decision-making systems, 11.2

ethics of military AI, 11.6

intelligence applications, 11.3

jurisprudence of AI governance, 11.5

Australia, defense education model , 3.3

Autonomous weapons systems , 11.2-11.4

accountability gap, 11.3

definitional controversies, 11.2

global debate on regulation, 11.2

Bangladesh's position, 11.4

B

Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) , 5.2, 5.3, 11.3

BAF 2040 vision, 5.3

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

fighter aircraft decision, 3.1, 5.2, 6.1

Bangladesh Army , 3.1-3.4, 7.1, 14.1

three-corps reorganization, 3.1-3.4

Bangladesh Coast Guard , 9.2

Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory (BMTF) , 2.2, 4.2

Bangladesh Navy , 4.1-4.4, 11.3, 14.2

submarine program, 4.2, 5.3

Bangladesh Ordnance Factories (BOF) , 2.2, 4.5, 10.2

Bangladesh-India relations , 4.2, 13.2, 14.1, 16.2

BSF killings, 14.3

Ganges Water Treaty, 16.4

July Revolution impact, 13.1, 13.2

strategic reset after crisis, 14.3

structural sources of tension, 14.1

Teesta River dispute, 2.4, 3.2

Bangladesh-Pakistan relations , 11.2, 14.3

Bangladesh-China relations , 4.3, 13.2, 16.2

arms dependency, 2.3, 6.2

comprehensive strategic partnership, 2.5

defense dimension, 2.3

Teesta China project, 2.4

Bangladesh-Myanmar relations , 4.4, 13.3, 16.2

border security challenges, 3.4, 13.3

Rohingya crisis, 3.3, 13.3

Bangladesh-USA relations , 4.4, 13.4, 14.2

ACSA and GSOMIA, 5.2, 5.3, 14.2

Indo-Pacific strategy, 4.1, 4.5, 14.1

Tiger Shark exercises, 4.1

Bay of Bengal , 4.5, 9.1-9.3, 14.1, 16.2

maritime strategy, 9.2, 14.5

strategic importance, 4.5, 9.1, 16.5

submarine question, 9.3

Berlin Peacekeeping Ministerial 2025 , 3.2, 5.1, 6.3

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative) , 8.3, 9.2, 16.3

BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party)

defense policy proposals, 2.2, 8.2, 14.1

industrial policy proposals, 8.2

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) , 9.1, 9.2, 11.1

legal framework, 3.3

Pilkhana mutiny (2009), 10.2

Border security , 9.1, 9.4, 14.3

legal framework for, 11.1-11.2

Myanmar border, 3.4, 13.3

Brahimi Report (2000) , 9.1

C

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) , 8.3

Capability-based planning , 14.3

CETC drone manufacturing agreement , 11.4, 6.2

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) , 3.4, 9.1-9.3, 14.1

1997 Peace Accord, 3.3, 9.3, 14.1

armed conflict history, 3.2

Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), 3.4, 9.3

legal architecture of governance, 3.5

military operations, 3.2

security situation, 3.4

Civil-military relations , 9.1-9.3, 13.1-13.2, 15.1

constitutional framework, 1.3

reform pathways, 13.2

theory of, 9.1, 7.1

Civil society and defense accountability , 13.2, 15.9

Clausewitz, Carl von , 1.4, 15.1

Comparative defense policy analysis , 1.1-1.2, 12.1-12.3

Complex interdependence theory , 7.5

Constitution of Bangladesh , 5.1, 2.1-2.2, 9.1-9.2

Article 31 (right to protection of law), 11.5

Article 32 (right to life), 11.5

Article 61 (supreme command), 5.1, 2.1

emergency powers (Article 141A), 1.2

fundamental rights framework, 2.2

parliamentary authority over defense, 2.3

proposed amendments for defense governance, 9.2

Constitutional moment theory , 13.1

Constructivism in IR theory , 7.3

Conventional deterrence , 2.3, 16.4

Corruption in defense procurement , 9.2, 7.1-7.3, 8.1

Counter-extremism , 4.1-4.4

institutional architecture, 4.2

legal framework, 4.1

madrasah question, 4.4

whole-of-society approach, 4.3

Court martial system , 2.2

Critical Legal Studies , 6.3

Cyber defense , 12.3, 15.2

legal framework, 7.1-7.3, 9.1, 11.4

military cyber operations, 7.2, 11.4

Cyber Safety Ordinance 2025 , 7.1-7.3, 4.3

Cyber warfare , 11.4-11.5

international legal framework, 4.2, 11.4

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Tallinn Manual, 4.2, 11.4

D

Defense budget , 11.2, 13.2, 14.1

2025-26 budget analysis, 2.3, 14.1

budget composition, 2.2

financing mechanisms, 2.5

parliamentary scrutiny, 6.3, 14.3

political economy of, 1.1, 16.1

Defense doctrine , 1.1-1.5, 14.4, 16.4

calibrated deterrence doctrine, 16.4

defensive realism with asymmetric deterrence, 2.3

gray zone defense doctrine, 14.4

hybrid defense doctrine, 14.4

People's Warfare Doctrine (BNP), 2.2

Defense Economic Zone (DEZ) , 12.2, 4.3, 8.3

legislative framework for, 8.3

policy analysis, 4.3

Defense education , 15.1-15.16

Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT), 7.4, 12.1

Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) curriculum reform, 10.3

Bangladesh National Defence University proposal, 5.1-5.4

civil society education on defense, 15.9

comparative models (Finland, South Korea, Australia, Israel, India), 3.1-3.5

defense journalism, 9.2

intelligence studies curriculum, 12.1-12.3

international partnerships, 11.1-11.3

legal education for defense governance, 7.1-7.3

parliamentary defense staff training, 8.2

professional military education, 10.1-10.3

strategic studies research agenda, 13.1-13.3

theory of professional defense education, 1.1-1.4

Defense industrial base , 11.3, 4.1-4.5, 10.1-10.11

current state assessment, 12.1

historical development, 2.1-2.4

political economy of, 7.1-7.3

private sector role, 4.1-4.3

Defense industrial policy , 10.1-10.11

draft framework (2026-2040), 10.2

theory and philosophy, 1.1-1.4

Defense journalism , 9.2

Defense policy drafting , 8.1-8.8

drafting methodology, 10.1-10.5

necessity-based drafting, 10.4, 8.1

theory of, 10.1, 8.1

Defense procurement , 5.1-5.3, 16.3

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

corruption in, 9.2, 7.1-7.3, 8.1

Defense Procurement Act proposal, 8.2

fighter aircraft decision (J-10CE, Eurofighter, JF-17), 3.1, 5.2, 6.1, 15.2

naval procurement, 3.3, 4.2-4.3

offset policies, 6.3

technology transfer, 12.3, 4.4

Defense White Paper , 3.3, 10.1-10.3, 14.2

content requirements, 10.2

drafting process, 10.3

model framework for Bangladesh, 10.2, 16.3

Democratic peace theory , 7.2

Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO) , 6.3

Deterrence theory , 2.3

DGFI (Directorate General of Forces Intelligence) , 5.2, 5.4, 2.4, 4.2

reform proposals, 5.4

Digital Security Act , 7.1

Directed energy weapons , 11.5-11.6

high-power microwave systems, 11.6

laser weapons, 11.5

Drone warfare , 6.1-6.2, 11.7

Baykar TB2, 5.2, 11.7

CETC UAV agreement, 6.2

Myanmar as drone warfare laboratory, 11.7

E

Economic dimensions of defense , 16.1

defense-economic growth nexus, 1.2

guns-versus-butter framing, 1.1

peacekeeping economy, 5.1-5.3

Electronic warfare , 11.8, 14.4

Electronic Warfare Brigade proposal, 4.4, 14.4

signals intelligence, 11.8

Emergency powers , 1.2, 5.1, 7.3

Enforced disappearances , 4.2, 16.6

Ethics of force , 16.6

just war theory, 16.6

proportionality principle, 16.2

Eurofighter Typhoon , 11.2, 6.1, 15.2

Export controls for defense technology , 12.1-12.2

F

Feminist security studies , 15.1

Fighter aircraft procurement , 3.1, 5.2, 6.1, 15.2

Chengdu J-10CE, 11.3, 3.1, 6.1

Eurofighter Typhoon, 3.1, 6.1, 15.2

JF-17 Block III, 3.1, 6.1

Finland, defense model , 8.1-8.2, 15.3

National Defence University, 3.1

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

total defence concept, 8.1

reserve system, 8.2

Forces Goal 2030 , 3.5, 11.1-11.2, 14.1

achievements and gaps, 11.1

G

Ganges Water Sharing Treaty , 16.4

Gender and peacekeeping , 3.1-3.2, 12.3

Geneva Conventions , 9.4, 11.5, 16.6

Geopolitical environment , 4.1-4.5, 6.1-6.8

Grand strategy for Bangladesh , 8.1-8.3, 16.5

five strategic objectives, 8.2, 16.5

framework pillars, 8.3

Gray zone warfare , 1.5, 14.4, 16.4

Bangladesh's vulnerabilities, 4.1, 14.4

hybrid defense doctrine, 4.3, 14.4

GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) , 5.3, 14.2

H

High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) , 9.1

Human rights and defense policy , 12.1-12.2, 16.6

accountability framework, 12.2

international human rights law, 12.1

Human security concept , 2.1

Huntington, Samuel , 9.1, 7.1

Hybrid warfare , 1.5, 14.4

I

India-Pakistan conflict (April-May 2025) , 6.2, 14.2

Indigenous defense industry , 11.3, 12.1-12.3, 4.1-4.5, 10.1-10.11

Bangladesh Ordnance Factories expansion, 4.5

Defense Economic Zone, 12.2, 4.3

technology transfer, 12.3, 4.4

Indo-Pacific strategic framework , 4.1, 4.5, 14.1, 16.3

Bangladesh's positioning, 4.5, 14.1, 16.3

Indonesia, defense model , 4.1-4.4, 12.3

bebas dan aktif doctrine, 4.2

territorial command system, 4.3

World Maritime Axis doctrine, 4.4

Information warfare , 11.11, 14.4

Bangladesh's cognitive vulnerability, 11.11

counter-disinformation architecture, 11.11

in peacekeeping environments, 8.1

Intelligence governance , 5.1-5.4, 7.1-7.2, 13.5

Intelligence Reform Act proposal, 5.2, 13.5, 16.3

parliamentary intelligence oversight, 5.3, 13.5

signals intelligence legal framework, 11.8

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Internal security , 9.1-9.12

conceptual framework, 1.1-1.4

historical trajectory, 2.1-2.4

legal framework for operations, 6.1-6.3, 5.1-5.3

legislative reform for, 10.1-10.3

International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) , 7.1-7.3

October 2025 arrest warrants, 7.3

International humanitarian law (IHL) , 14.1, 16.6

cyber operations under, 14.2

education in, 15.7

International law and defense policy , 5.4, 9.1-9.3, 16.6

Islamist militancy in Bangladesh , 2.3, 4.1-4.4

Holey Artisan Bakery attack (2016), 2.3

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), 2.3

post-July 2024 environment, 2.4

Islamic jurisprudence and defense , 6.4, 13.4, 16.1

Israel, defense model , 6.1-6.3, 15.4

defense industry, 6.2

national defense doctrine, 6.3

J

Japan defense agreement (February 2026) , 11.3, 15.2, 16.2

Javelin anti-tank missile (FGM-148) , 6.3

JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft , 3.1, 6.1

Joint operations doctrine , 8.1-8.3, 16.4

July Revolution 2024 , 11.1, 13.1, 16.1

Jus in bello , 11.6, 16.6

K

Kant, Immanuel , 1.3, 16.1

Kautilya's Arthashastra , 1.2, 16.2

Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) , 3.4, 9.3

L

Legal education for defense governance , 7.1-7.3, 15.7

Legal pluralism and security law , 16.3

Legal positivism and defense , 6.2, 13.4

Legislative reform for defense , 15.1-15.6, 13.1-13.16, 16.3

constitutional amendment possibilities, 9.1-9.3

Defense Budget Transparency Act proposal, 3.4, 16.3

Defense Procurement Act proposal, 8.2, 13.8

Intelligence Reform Act proposal, 5.2, 13.7, 16.3

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Military Justice Reform Act proposal, 6.3, 13.6

National Defense Act proposal, 3.4, 8.2, 13.3, 16.3

National Security Council Act proposal, 4.1-4.4, 13.4

parliamentary defense committee reform, 5.2, 13.5

Peacekeeping Participation Act proposal, 13.2

Liberalism in IR theory , 7.2

Liberation War of 1971 , 3.3, 16.1

M

Maritime security policy , 15.1, 9.1-9.3, 14.5

draft framework, 15.1

three-dimensional navy concept, 4.1

Matarbari deep sea port , 14.2

Military business enterprises , 16.2, 3.1-3.5

Army Welfare Trust, 3.1

competition with private sector, 3.4

reform framework, 3.5

Sena Kalyan Sangstha, 3.1

Military doctrine , 1.1-1.5, 16.4

contemporary developments, 1.5

history of, 1.2

multi-domain operations, 1.5

theory of, 1.1

Military justice reform , 4.1-4.3, 6.1-6.3, 13.6

court martial system, 2.2, 6.2

Military Justice Reform Act proposal, 6.3, 13.6

Modernization program (2026-2040) , 11.2, 15.1, 16.5

$75 billion framework, 10.1, 15.1

fiscal architecture for, 6.1-6.5

Multi-domain operations (MDO) , 1.5

Multilateral security frameworks , 8.3, 5.1-5.2, 16.3

Myanmar civil war , 10.3, 13.3, 16.2

N

National Citizen Party (NCP) , 1.3, 5.3, 4.3

National Defense Act proposal , 15.2, 3.4, 13.3, 16.3

command authority provisions, 3.3

comparative models, 3.2

draft framework, 3.4, 8.2

National interest articulation , 8.2

National Security Council (NSC) , 9.1, 4.1-4.4, 13.4

comparative models, 9.2

draft legislation, 9.3, 13.4

National Security Advisor role, 4.3, 13.4

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

National security concept , 2.1-2.4

National Security Strategy , 15.1-15.3, 8.2

content requirements, 15.2

draft for Bangladesh, 2.2

Natural law and defense , 6.1

Necessity-based drafting , 10.4, 8.1, 16.1

Network-centric warfare , 5.3, 14.1

Non-alignment policy , 4.5, 16.5

philosophical foundations, 7.2

NSI (National Security Intelligence) , 5.2

O

Official Secrets Act 1923 , 4.4

Operational strategy , 14.1-14.12

P

Pact for the Future (UN) , 9.2

Pakistan defense engagement , 11.2, 14.3

Parliamentary defense oversight , 14.1-14.3, 5.1-5.2, 13.5

budget and appropriations, 14.3

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence reform, 14.2, 13.5

theory of, 14.1

Peacekeeping (UN) , 8.2, 12.1-12.16

accountability crisis (sexual exploitation and abuse), 7.1-7.4

Bangladesh's record and responsibilities, 2.2-2.3, 12.2

economic dimensions, 5.1-5.3, 12.5

future architecture, 14.1-14.2

gender dimension, 3.1-3.2, 12.3

legal framework, 4.1-4.3, 12.4

Peacekeeping Participation Act proposal, 13.2

soft power and diplomacy, 11.1-11.3, 12.11

People's Warfare Doctrine , 2.2

Pilkhana mutiny (2009) , 10.2

Police reform , 6.1-6.3, 11.1-11.3

Police Act of 1861, 3.1, 6.1

Political economy of defense , 16.1-16.5, 1.1-1.5, 7.1-7.3, 8.1-8.5

defense budget process, 16.2

military business enterprises, 3.1-3.5, 16.2

procurement corruption, 7.1-7.3, 8.1

Political theory and defense , 9.1-9.3

Post-colonial theory , 7.4

Principal-agent problem in security governance , 1.4

Procurement integrity , 6.3, 8.2, 16.3

Proportionality principle , 16.2

Q

Quantum computing , 11.3-11.5

post-quantum cryptography, 11.4

strategic implications for Bangladesh, 11.3

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

R

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) , 3.2, 4.2, 6.3, 11.3, 16.6

case for abolition, 3.2, 6.3

US sanctions, 3.2

Realism in IR theory , 7.1

Reserve force concept , 10.3

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) , 7.3, 15.2, 16.6

Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) , 1.2

Rohingya crisis , 13.3, 3.3, 5.1-5.3, 12.1, 16.2

armed groups in camps (ARSA, ARA), 5.2, 12.1

defense policy implications, 10.3

international law dimensions, 10.2

peacekeeping dimensions, 12.1

security nexus, 5.1-5.3

Rome Statute and ICC , 9.2

Rules of engagement , 4.3, 12.4, 16.4

Russia-Ukraine war implications , 10.3

S

SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) , 8.3, 5.2

Security dilemma , 2.2

Security sector reform (SSR) , 1.1-1.4, 13.1-13.2

2024-2026 reform moment, 1.3

theory of, 1.1

Sena Kalyan Sangstha , 3.1, 3.3

Sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping , 7.1-7.4, 12.7

Singapore, defense model , 7.1-7.2

poisonous shrimp strategy, 7.1

Siper air defense system (Turkey) , 5.3, 3.2

South Korea, defense model , 3.1-3.4, 15.3

alliance management with US, 3.2

defense white paper, 3.3

industrial complex transformation, 3.4

Space-based assets , 11.6-11.7

anti-satellite capabilities, 11.6

Bangabandhu-1 satellite, 11.6

legal framework for military space operations, 11.6

Special Operations Forces , 7.1-7.2

Special Powers Act 1974 , 5.2, 3.4, 5.1, 7.3

St. Martin's Island , 4.3

Strategic autonomy , 2.4, 14.1, 16.5

philosophical foundations, 11.1

Strategic balancing (hedging) , 8.1

Strategic culture , 15.1, 16.1

Strategic studies research agenda , 13.1-13.3

Copyright © 2026 Bangladesh Defense Policy: Foundations, Futures And Frameworks by S M Nazmuz Sakib

Submarine program , 4.2, 5.3, 14.5

KSS-I (South Korea), 4.2

Ming-class (China), 4.1

Sun Tzu , 1.2

T

Tallinn Manual on cyber operations , 4.2, 11.4

Technology transfer in defense procurement , 12.3, 4.4, 10.3

Teesta River dispute , 2.4, 3.2, 16.2

Thucydides , 1.2

Turkey-Bangladesh defense partnership , 5.1-5.3, 6.1, 14.2, 16.2

Baykar drones, 5.2

defense industrial transformation lessons, 5.1

Siper air defense system, 5.3, 14.2

U

UN peacekeeping (see Peacekeeping)

UN80 reform process , 6.3, 12.6

United States relationship (see Bangladesh-USA relations)

V

Vietnam, defense model , 2.1-2.4

Four Nos doctrine, 2.2

People's War doctrine, 2.3

W

Wassenaar Arrangement , 4.4, 12.1

Water security , 16.4

Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) , 3.1, 12.3

World Defence Show 2026 , 10.2, 2.2

Y

Yunus, Muhammad (interim government) , 1.1, 11.1, 13.1, 16.2

China visit (March 2025), 2.2

defense diversification drive, 11.2

S M Nazmuz Sakib

S M Nazmuz Sakib is an interdisciplinary scholar, researcher and author bridging IT, business analytics, and applied research. He is a Fellow of the Scholars Academic and Scientific Society, a Member of IAENG, a lifetime member of BELTA, and a Bangladeshi Arena Grand Master (AGM) recognized by FIDE. His credentials include extensive certifications across AWS, Google/SAS analytics, UX, project management, digital marketing, and finance. Sakib has published several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters with Springer Nature, CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, and IGI Global on various topics.

Bangladesh Defense Policy

Bangladesh's first comprehensive defense textbook, written after the 2024 Revolution, integrates philosophy, law, geopolitics, and doctrine to build a democratic, accountable, and strategically autonomous security architecture. It proposes a "Calibrated Deterrence" framework, model legislation (National Defense Act, Intelligence Reform Act), and a 2026-2040 grand strategy. The core argument: democratic legitimacy is a strategic asset, and security and liberty are complements, not rivals.

DOI: 10.5281.zenodo.19565766